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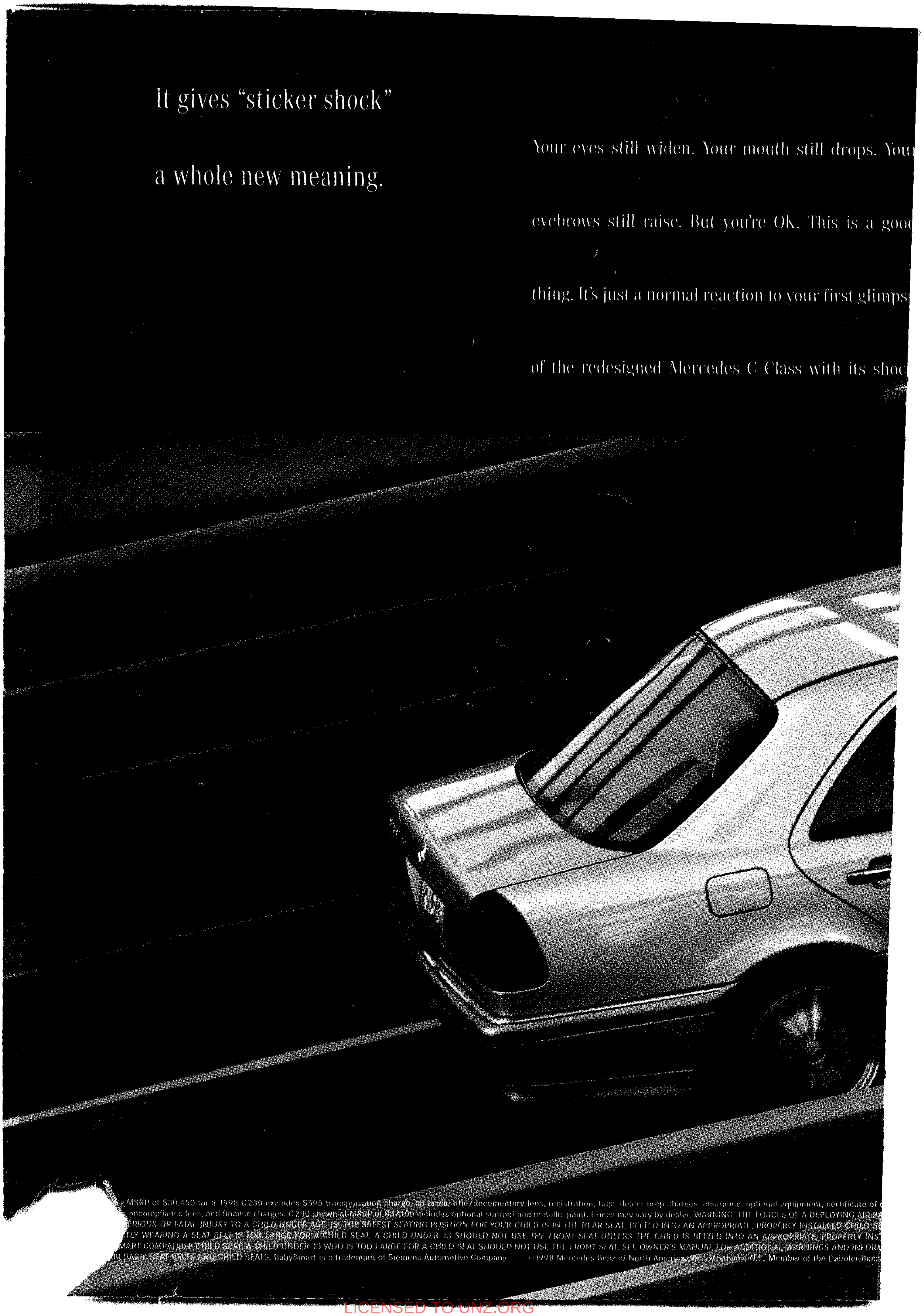

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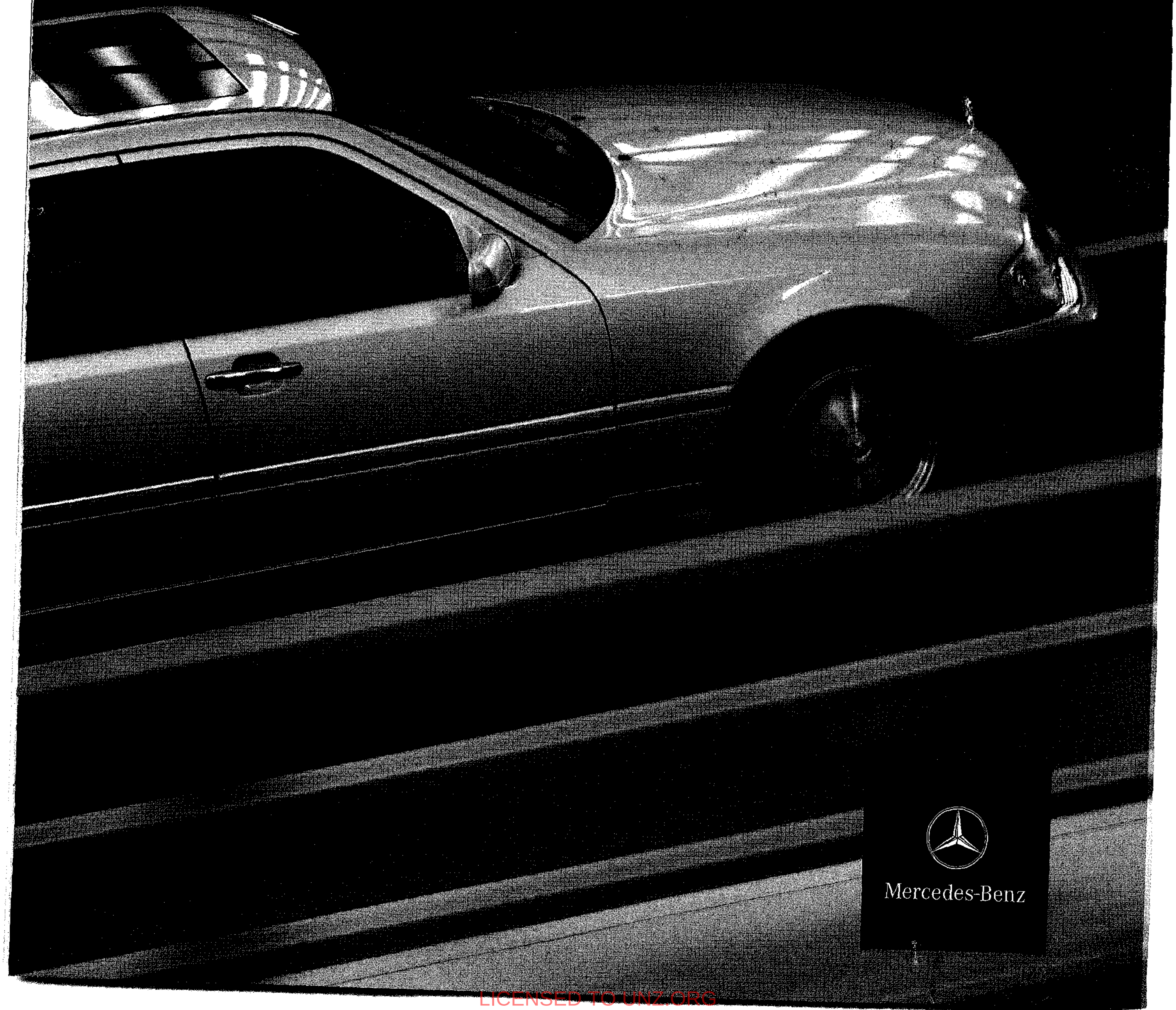

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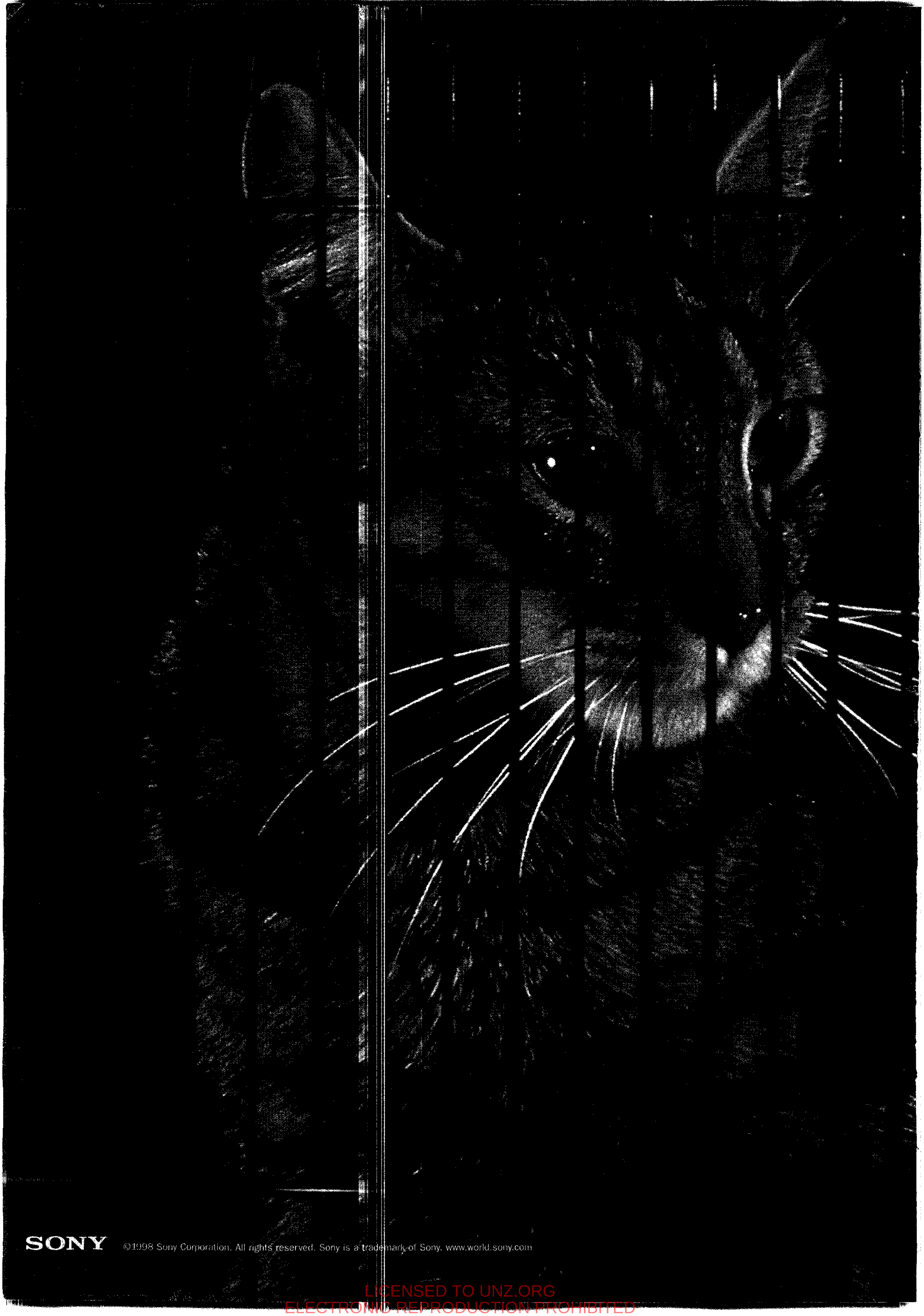

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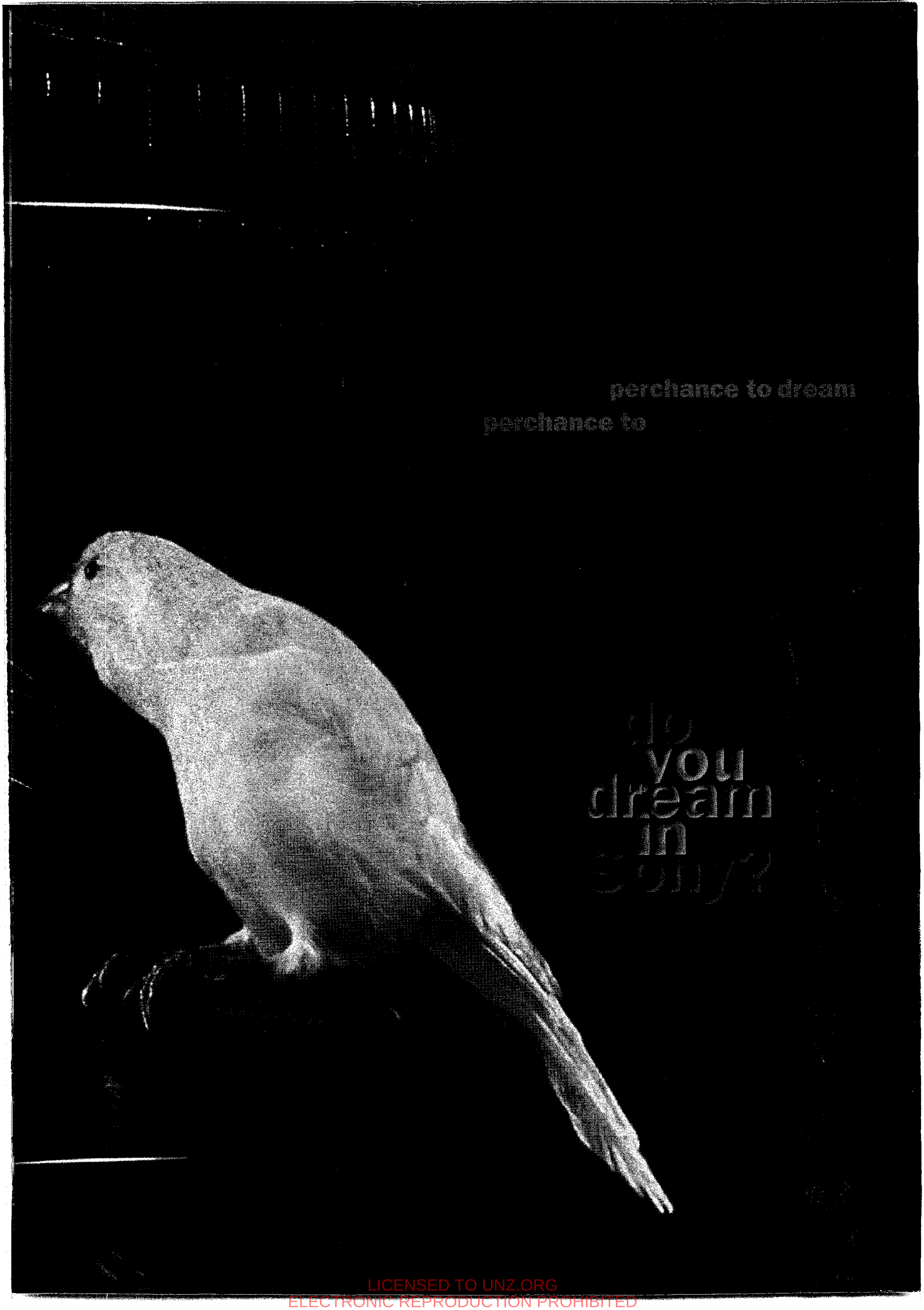

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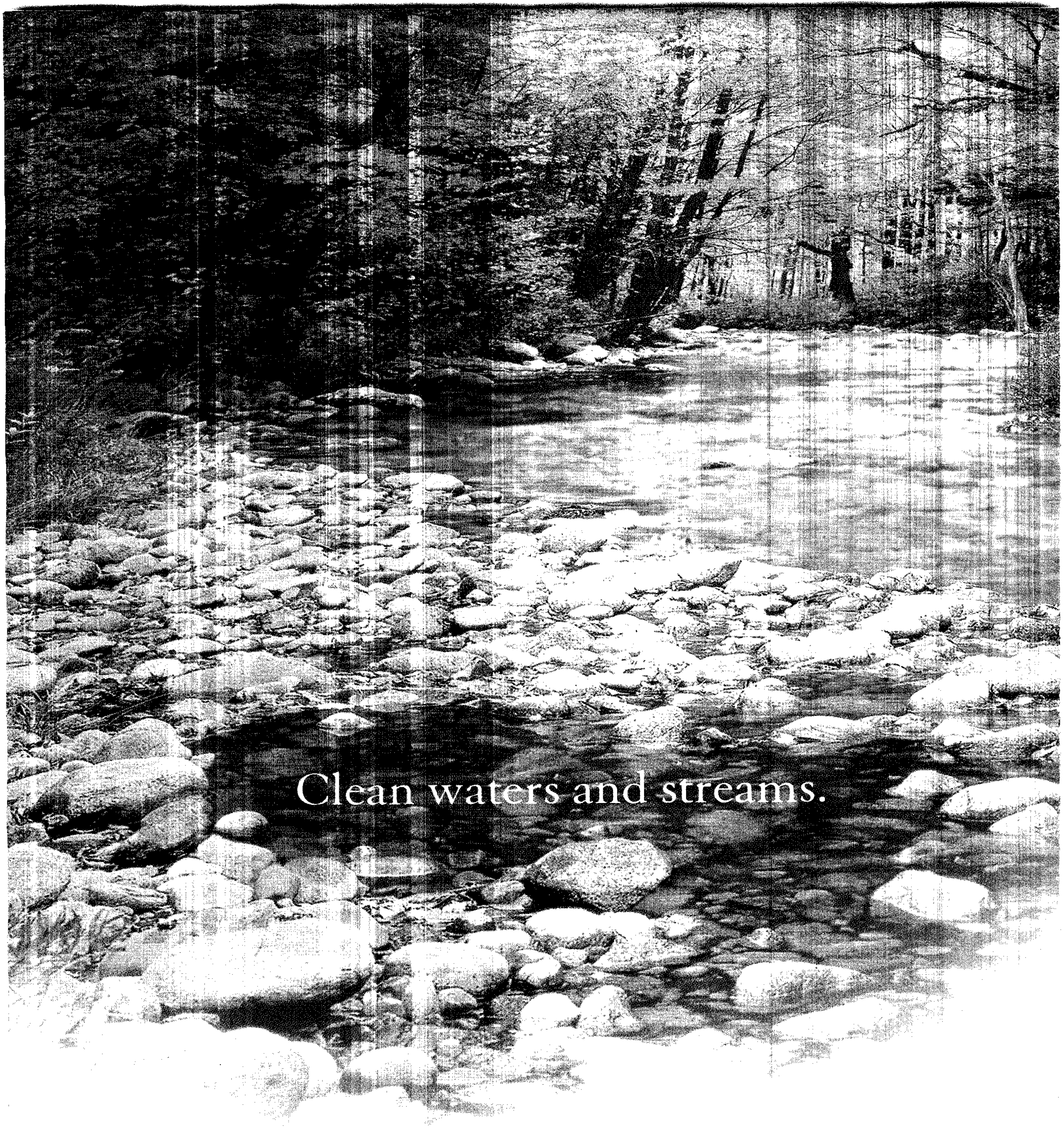
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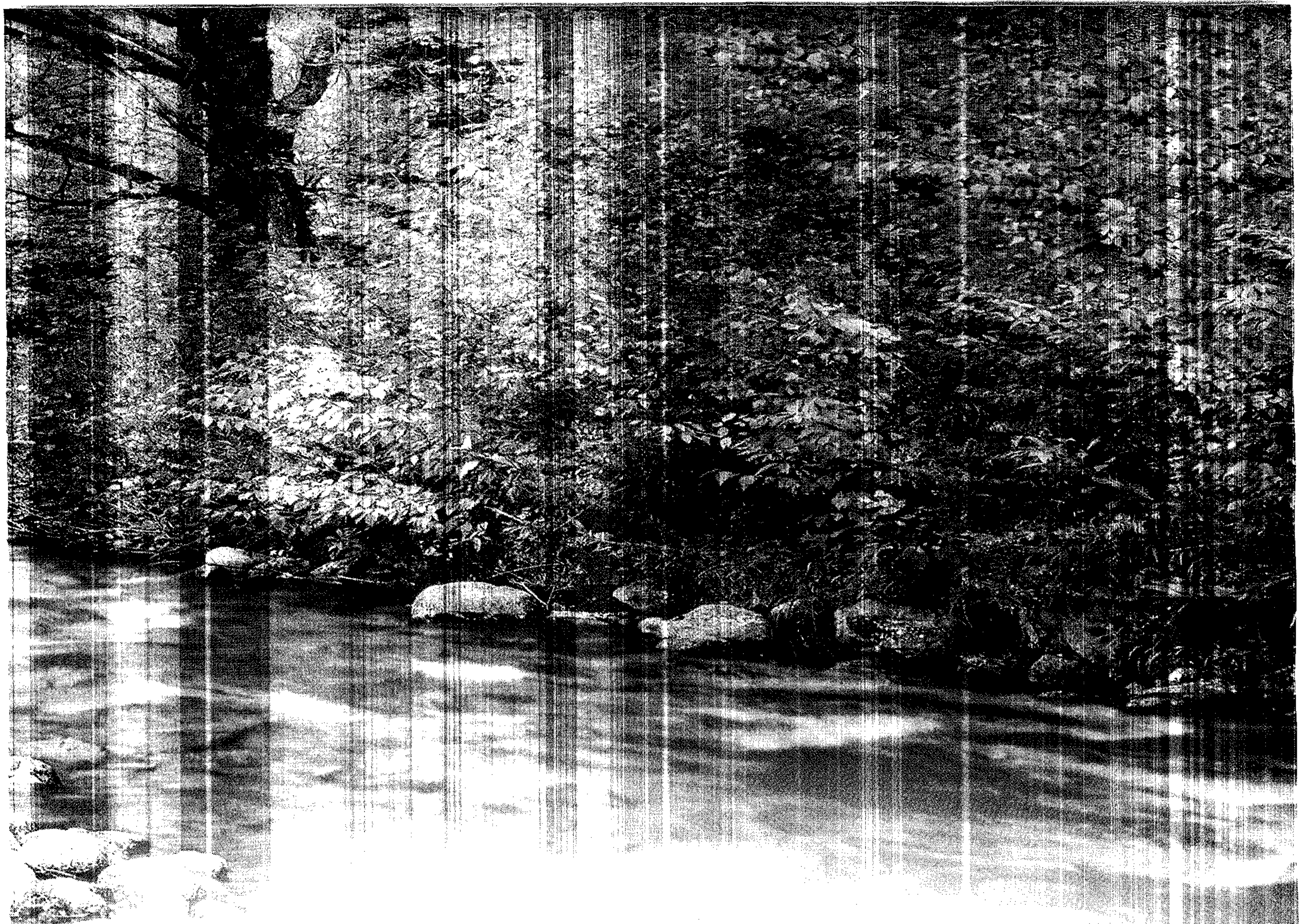

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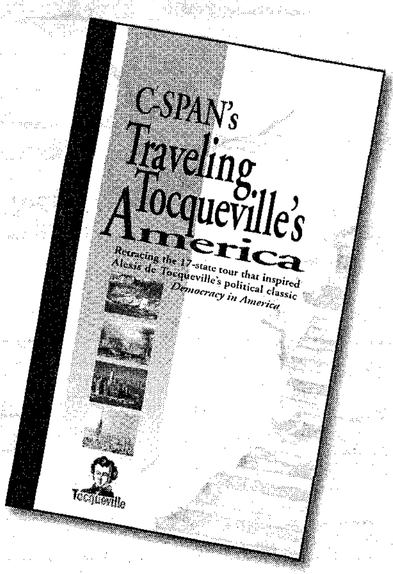
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COMMENT

ROCKETS' RED GLARE

Putting the China satellite deal in perspective.

IN 1992, in Beijing, a young woman named Ma Pingchuan did a rare and courageous thing: she distributed a statement to her co-workers at *China Petroleum News* in which she accused the paper's deputy editor-in-chief of sexual harassment. At the editor's behest, she was charged with slander and convicted. Ma was sentenced to two years in jail, but she continued her protest. She got in touch with the Minyan (People's Voice) law firm, which is a group of independent public-interest lawyers in Beijing. Minyan appealed her case to the Intermediate People's Court, which upheld the conviction but released Ma after seven months in prison. Still, she persisted. The Minyan lawyers appealed her initial conviction to the High Court of Hebei Province, and in April of 1996 the High Court reversed the prior courts' judgments and pronounced Ma not guilty of slander.

This is a perfect Chinese story, subtle and earth-shattering, and it's a pretty good metaphor as well. It may have been the first time in four thousand years that a Chinese man was judged guilty of sexual harassment, although the result was achieved indirectly, by inference: his accuser was found innocent of slander. The case would not exactly qualify as justice by Western standards, but it most definitely constitutes progress for the Chinese.

Thus it is in China as Bill Clinton prepares for the first visit there by an American President since before the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. The Chinese government remains unapologetically undemocratic. There are, however, signs of expanding—if still fragile—personal and religious freedom, and of some legal protections for the rapidly growing middle class. "There is no question that there has been a considerable loosening of control in terms of free speech and what people can write," Sidney Jones, of Human Rights Watch, says.

Ms. Jones, though, is quick to add that "there have been periods like this before—the three years before 1989, for example—that quickly went sour when the government perceived a threat from the streets." Her caveat is significant. With unemployment rising as a result of economic reform—the government's effort to close inefficient state-owned enterprises—there is fear that the next great Chinese uprising will be a rebellion by abandoned workers and will be far more serious than the students' poignant protest of 1989 (which is why independent labor leaders are more

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likely targets of government repression these days than religious or academic agitators are).

But the growing personal freedom in China and the relatively responsible behavior of the Chinese government since Jiang Zemin assumed control, after the death of Deng Xiaoping, last year, are quite significant, too. American negotiators say that the Chinese have been surprisingly, if quietly, coöperative on issues ranging from human rights to non-proliferation (more coöperative on limiting sales of nuclear technology to Iran, for example, than the Russians have been). Certainly, under normal circumstances there would be ample cause for Bill Clinton to feel quite satisfied with his policy of "engaging" China—that is, the quiet nudging of the Chinese leadership toward domestic reform and a more benign international posture—and this month should have been a good time for the President to visit the new leaders of the world's most populous country on their home turf, in the Great Hall of the People, on Tiananmen Square.

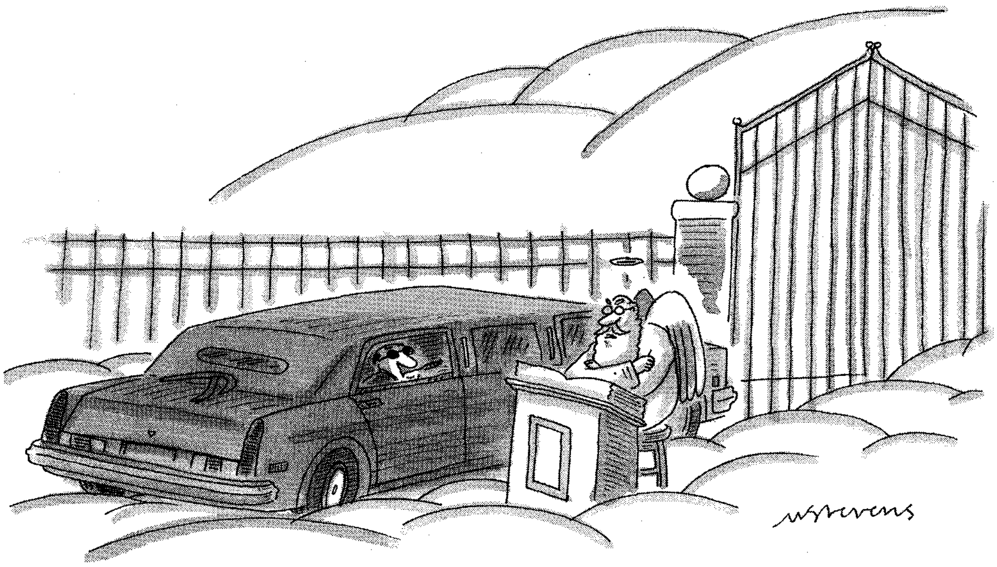
Unfortunately, scandal—or, more precisely, the appearance of scandal—threatens to damage the effort. It is possible that the Chinese government undertook a clumsy effort to emulate its Taiwanese rivals and influence American politics by making illegal campaign contributions. And there is the more serious charge that President Clinton compromised national security by allowing military technology to flow into China, as a quid pro quo for donations from the Democratic Party's largest personal contributor, Bernard Schwartz, who is the chairman of Loral Space & Communications, Inc. This is especially worrisome as the Indians and the Pakistanis (who are China's closest allies) intensify their nuclear rivalry.

The facts of the case are complicated. Loral did occasionally use inexpensive Chinese rockets to launch commercial communications satellites, as other American aerospace companies have also done. The rules governing such launches are very strict: licenses and Presidential waivers must be granted, each filled with precise instructions and, in the words of one Administration official, lots of "Thou Shalt Nots." Each satellite is then accompanied by Department of Defense monitors, whose task is to make sure that no "prohibited" information is given to the Chinese. But after a rocket carrying a Loral satellite crashed, in 1996, the company decided to review the causes of the rocket's failure and apparently tried to pass its findings along to the Chinese without the approval of the American government. (Such findings might have helped the Chinese build more accurate missiles.) The case is being investigated by the Justice Department.

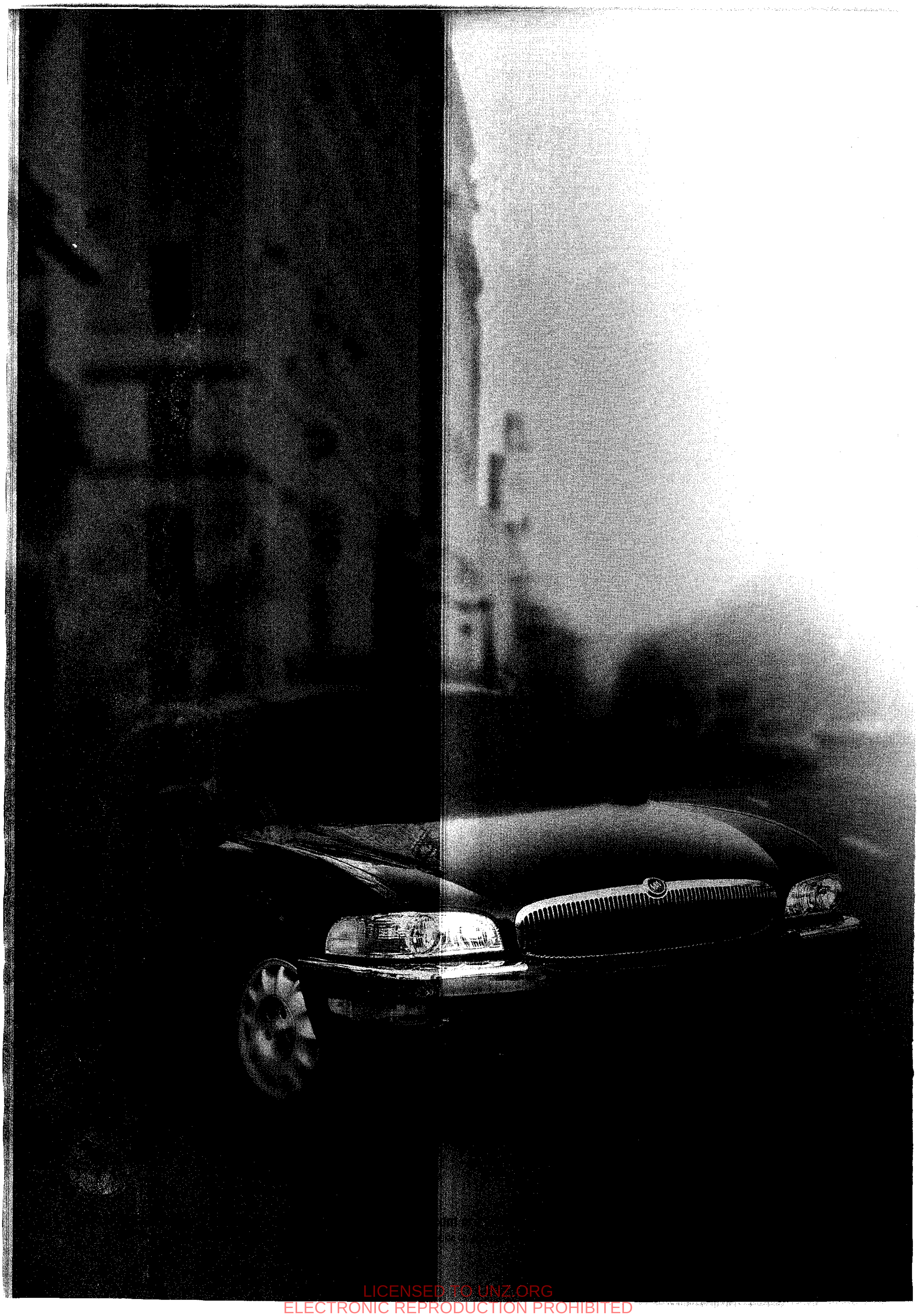
Despite this potentially serious inquiry, President Clinton granted Loral a waiver last February to launch *another* satellite in China. Various overheated commentators have assumed that this was done as a special favor to Bernard Schwartz. Officials who were involved in the process, however, maintain that, right or wrong, the Loral approval represented nothing more than government policy as usual. (So do Loral executives.) Defense contractors are assumed to be innocent while they are under investigation—they can seek and receive approval to sell sensitive military equipment. This was Bush Administration policy, and it was adopted by Clinton, at the behest of congressional Republicans, in 1993. "Many large defense contractors are under investigation constantly," an Administration official involved in the non-proliferation area says. If a company is indicted, the waivers and licenses granted can be withdrawn. James Kennedy, a Clinton aide, says that if Loral is indicted as a result of the Justice Department inquiry it might not be allowed to launch the new satellite, which is scheduled for November.

Arguments can be made for and against the policy of using Chinese rockets to launch American satellites—and it is undoubtedly true that if the policy is continued, under whatever safeguards, the very presence of Americans bearing technology will prove beneficial to the Chinese military—but the explosion of journalistic and political outrage (some Republicans accused the President of treason) over a very technical and historically bipartisan policy is mystifying. Then again, China has been an easy target for demagoguery from both the left and the right ever since the brutal events of June, 1989.

In June of 1998, there is substantial evidence that the new Chinese government is serious about some economic and legal reforms, but it is also intent on maintaining control over a tumultuous country, at any cost. These goals inevitably conflict. President Clinton, like President Bush before him, is gambling that American economic involvement, and the prosperity for the average Chinese that results, is more likely to bring stability than chaos. It is a policy that appears, finally, to be paying some dividends. And that should be cause for celebration. In fact, if Bill Clinton must suffer the discomfort of raising a glass in Tiananmen Square with Jiang Zemin, he might also consider visiting the Minyan law firm to toast the successful struggle for personal freedom of Ma Pingchuan. —JOE KLEIN



"I don't think so."



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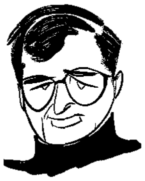
CONTRIBUTORS

ALEXANDER STILLE ("Faking It," p. 36), a contributor to *The New Yorker* since 1988, is the author of "Benevolence and Betrayal" and "Excellent Cadavers." His most recent article, "The Ganges' Next Life," was published in January.

JAMES SUROWIECKI ("The Billion-Dollar Blade," p. 43) is a business columnist for *Slate* and *New York.* His review of "The Circle of Innovation," by Tom Peters, was published in this magazine in January. He lives in Brooklyn.



PAUL THEROUX ("Nurse Wolf," p. 50) is the author of the novel "Kowloon Tong" and the forthcoming memoir "Sir Vidia's Shadow." He has been a contributor to *The New Yorker* since 1979.

NICHOLSON BAKER ("Grab Me a Gondola," p. 64) has been a contributor to this magazine since 1981. His books include "The Size of Thoughts," portions of which appeared in *The New Yorker*, and, most recently, the novel "The Everlasting Story of Nory." He lives in Berkeley.

HELMUT NEWTON (photographs, pp. 51, 55) has published more than fifteen books, including "Private Property" and the forthcoming "Contents Unknown." His most recent exhibition, "Anton Josef Trcka, Edward Weston and Helmut Newton," appeared at the Kestner-Gesellschaft in Hanover. He lives in Monte Carlo.

JEANETTE WINTERSON (Fiction, p. 70) is a novelist whose books include "Sexing the Cherry," which won the E. M. Forster Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and, most recently, "Gut Symmetries." She lives in London.

SCOTT L. MALCOMSON (Books, p. 78) is working on his third book, "One Drop of Blood: A Personal History of Racial Separatism." His review of Russell Banks's new novel was published in *The New Yorker* in April. ♦

THE MAIL

STARR REDUX

I was surprised by Jeffrey Toobin's remark, in his article about the independent counsel ("Starr Can't Help It," May 18th), that the reputations of Oliver North and Ronald Reagan "will never recover" from the Walsh investigation of the Iran-Contra scandal. Reagan and North have recovered pretty damn well, if you ask me. North's reputation has fared well enough that he came very close to being elected senator from Virginia only a few years after his conviction for obstructing justice, destroying documents, and accepting an illegal gratuity—all felonies—was overturned on a technicality. He now appears regularly on cable television to discuss Clinton's "crimes" and "violations of the law." Meanwhile, "scot-free" is the adjective that most often comes to mind when buildings and airports are being named after the guy who authorized arms for hostages. Reagan's reputation, like North's, appears to have had no adverse consequences to recover *from.*

PHIL CATALFO
Berkeley, Calif.

Mr. Toobin's analysis of the Starr investigation contains a puzzling reference to the hero of a Sinclair Lewis novel: "According to Clinton's defenders," he writes, "Ken Starr is Babbitt with a badge." But Toobin's description of Starr as a Goody Two-shoes who "now calls down legal hellfire and brimstone as a prosecutor" seems less George Babbitt, the epitome of the small-minded philistine, than Elmer Gantry, the eponymous hero of another Lewis novel, who got "everything from the church and Sunday School, except, perhaps, any longing whatever for decency and kindness and reason."

LOREN F. SCHMIDTBERGER
Manahawkin, N.J.

Kenneth Starr's letter to the editor implies that people who have received awards and special designations should be immune from criticism (The Mail, June 1st). He should therefore note that President Clinton has received the highest possible accolade: the voters' approval.

DAVID LINDSAY
Silver Spring, Md.

TV NATION

Kurt Andersen suggests that the hype surrounding the end of "Seinfeld" (Talk of the Town, May 18th) was about the wistfulness or the impending mortality of the postwar generation, but it wasn't. It was about money and marketing—in other words, the hype, like the series, was a show about nothing. Andersen mentions several TV series over the past thirty years that came to an end without fanfare, but back then the networks weren't savvy enough to hype "The Fugitive" or "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" as a national cultural phenomenon, and watching TV was just something you did when you had nothing better to do. We Americans seem to have forgotten that these days TV shows exist to fill the ever-shorter intervals between the commercials. Watching TV is still what you do when you have nothing better to do; what's surprising is the number of us who no longer think of it that way.

DEIRDRA MCAFEE
Richmond, Va.

IF ONLY WE COULD

Warren Beatty sees a convincing analogy between modern politicians who pander to demographics and big-budget Hollywood executives who sacrifice artistic substance for special effects in the name of ticket sales ("The White Negro," by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., May 11th), but there is one crucial difference: the discerning moviegoer can opt for an independent; the discerning voter cannot.

MICHAEL OSTLAND
Berkeley, Calif.

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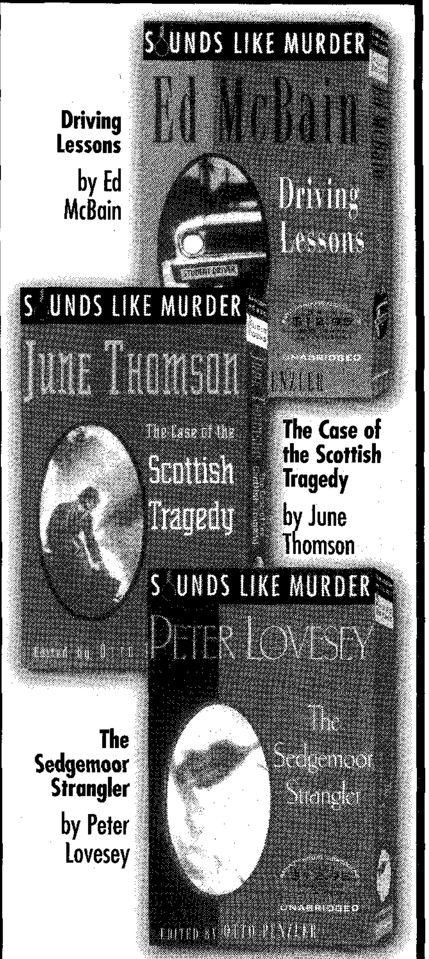

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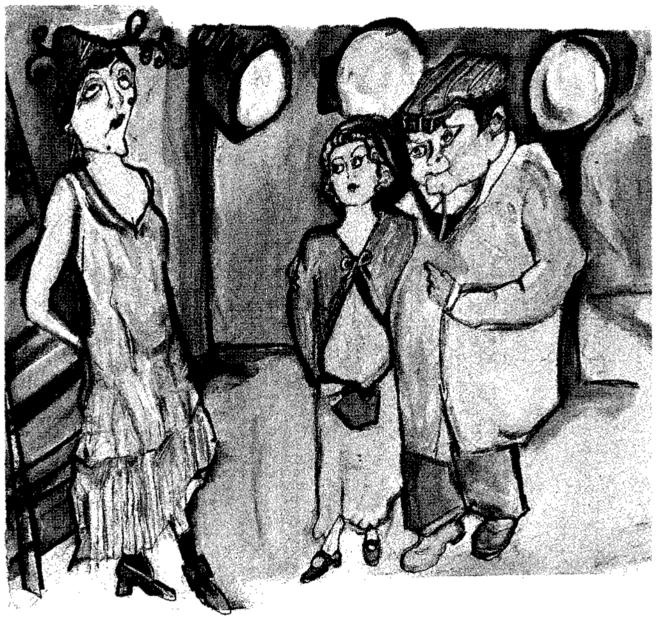
As Thousands Cheer—This Drama Dept. production of Moss Hart and Irving Berlin's 1933 satirical revue stars Kevin Chamberlin, Judy Kuhn, Howard McGillin, Paula Newsome, Mary Beth Peil, and B. D. Wong. In previews through June 13. Opens June 14 at 3. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 541-8441.)

Avow—A pregnant woman falls for a priest, in a new comedy/drama by Bill C. Davis. In previews. (The Directors Company, 311 W. 43rd St. 501-3992.)

Fishes—A child named Junebug dreams of becoming a cold-blooded aquatic animal, in a play by Diana Son. In previews through June 12. Opens June 13 at 8. (46 Walker Street Theatre, 46 Walker St. 560-7387.)

The Fishkin Touch—The Jewish Repertory Theatre wraps up its season with a musical comedy, set in 1910 on the Lower East Side. In previews through June 13. Opens June 14 at 7. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)



"Once in a Lifetime," staged by the Atlantic Theatre Company.

JENNY BELIN

The Jello Is Always Red—The songwriter Clark Gesner ("You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown") stars in a revue of his own music. One preview on June 10. Opens June 11 at 8. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820.)

Lillian—In his new solo show, David Cale portrays a middle-aged woman who leaves her husband for a younger man. In previews through June 14. Opens June 15 at 7. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

A New Brain—Malcolm Gets is a songwriter awaiting surgery, in a new musical by William Finn ("Falsettos") and James Lapine. Graciela Daniele is the director. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			10	11	12	13
14	15	16				

Pera Palas—The Turkish playwright Sinan Unel's drama, set in the Istanbul hotel of the same name, examines the clash of Eastern and Western cultures in his native country. Preview on June 10. Opens June 11 at 8. (McGinn Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 246-8355.)

The Race of the Ark Tattoo—The Foundry Theatre and P.S. 122 present a theatre piece by W. David Hancock, set in a flea market, in which each night's story is evoked by relics randomly selected from the rummage. Previews begin June 10. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

Sakina's Restaurant—Aasif Mandvi portrays six characters in his one-man exploration of the South Asian/East Indian community in New York. In previews. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

The Skin of Our Teeth—Frances Conroy, John Goodman, and Kristen Johnston star in Thornton Wilder's play, the New York Shakespeare Festival's first outdoor production of the season. Previews begin June 12. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 539-8750.)

Smoke on the Mountain—The 1990 musical comedy returns to the Lamb's Theatre. In previews. (130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

Stupid Kids—A dark comedy of suburban-teen angst, by the late playwright John C. Russell. Michael Mayer is the director. In previews through June 12. Opens June 13 at 8. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

Villa Villa—The Argentinean troupe De La Guarda brings its airborne, bungee-jumping, acrobatic performance hybrid to town. In previews. (Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.)

You Never Can Tell—The Roundabout Theatre Company offers one of Shaw's early "pleasant" plays, set at a British seaside resort. Directed by Nicholas Martin. In previews. (Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Art—Yasmina Reza's farce is a splendid vehicle for three masterly actors, Victor Garber, Alan Alda, and Alfred Molina. They portray friends whose fifteen-year relationship is threatened when one of them buys a large white canvas for two hundred thousand francs. Directed by Matthew Warchus. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/23/98.) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Ascendancy—A drama by Gary Bonasorte, set in an AIDS clinic after the release of a promising new drug. (Theatre Off Park, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 627-2556. Closes June 14.)

The Beauty Queen of Leenane—The precocious Anglo-Irish playwright Martin McDonagh's riveting winter's tale, set in a rural Irish cottage, about an aged mother and her virgin forty-year-old daughter, who is trapped in a punishing solitude. It's a simple, primitive story, yet it is filled with complex emotional surprises and reversals. (3/16/98) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Cabaret—A mesmerizing production of the Kander and Ebb musical. Here, the dancers at the Kit Kat Klub, the symbol of anything-goes Weimar Germany, look shell-shocked and stigmatized. As the Emcee, Alan Cumming is astonishing—with his bruised-looking body, his huge, knowing eyes, and his satanic energy, he's a spectacle of mixed messages. Natasha Richardson, as Sally Bowles, casts a spectral glow. Directed by Sam Mendes. (4/6/98) (Kit Kat Klub, 124 W. 43rd St. 719-1300.)

The Chairs—The British troupe Théâtre de Complicité's superb staging of Ionesco's one-act tragic farce has established finally and forever the indubitable poetry and genius of the play, written nearly half a century ago. Directed by Simon McBurney. (4/13/98) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes June 14.)

Chicas 2000—An encore staging of Carmelita Tropicana's comedy about love in the age of genetic remodelling, in which she finds herself in the slammer for murdering a man who cloned cells from her derrière. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes June 27.)

The Diary of Anne Frank—Theatrically, this reworking of the 1955 play by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett is an improvement, and the cast is fine. But the play's realism is its fundamental flaw: we can't really recreate for ourselves what Anne's dreadful situation was like. (12/15/97) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Dinah Was—Oliver Goldstick's play about the late singer Dinah Washington (Yvette Freeman). (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

Dress to Kill—The British comic Eddie Izzard returns to town with a new show. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391.)

The Dying Gaul—"You can do anything you want," a married Hollywood producer (Tony Goldwyn) tells a gay screenwriter (Tim Hopper)—whom he is seducing out of his artistic integrity and into a disastrous affair—"as long as you don't call it what it is." The problem with Craig Lucas's complex new play, despite the typically fine direction by Mark Brokaw and topnotch performances by the entire cast (especially Linda Emond, as the producer's wife), is that you can't figure out what it is to begin with—a righteous meditation on personal responsibility or an angry, Buddhist guide to guilt-free revenge. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874. Closes June 14.)

Ensemble Studio Theatre—The final series in this year's six-week marathon of one-acts runs through June 14, with plays by David Mamet, Leslie Ayvazian, Elinor Renfield and Joyce Carol Oates, Keith Alan Benja-

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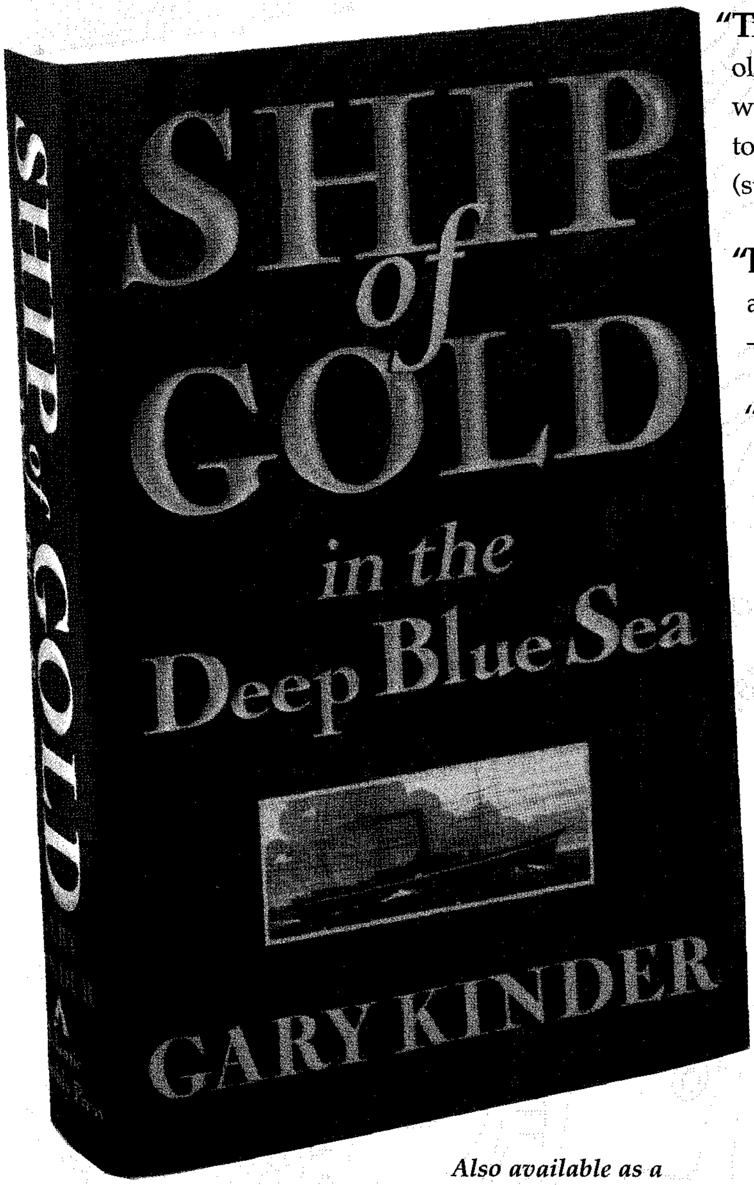

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Peggy Shaw, in her one-woman show "Menopausal Gentleman."

KIM DE MARCO

min, and Ari Roth. (549 W. 52nd St. 247-4982.)

Freak—In his "pseudo-autobiographical" one-man show about growing up in New York, John Leguizamo takes the audience on a very funny, breakneck jaunt down distorted-memory lane. He's a small guy, but his seemingly boneless body and boundless humor fill the large stage, and he absolutely charms, from start to finish. Directed by David Bar Katz. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Hedwig and the Angry Inch—Hedwig, as written and portrayed by John Cameron Mitchell, is a sweet transsexual singer from East Berlin, whose cabaret performance cum stadium act becomes a smart, funny, and very moving exploration of the redemptive, if perhaps fleeting, power of love. (Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

High Society—This musical, based on Philip Barry's play "The Philadelphia Story" and the subsequent movie "High Society," has all the kick of flat champagne. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Honour—The Australian playwright Joanna Murray-Smith examines the relationships between two long-married writers (Jane Alexander and Robert Foxworth), a young journalist (Laura Linney), and the couple's daughter (Enid Graham). She brings some very smart words to bear on the truth that lies under the truisms of married life—and of the writing life—but the words don't add up to a satisfying, emotionally gripping drama. Two of the performances, though, lift the play to a level above the merely interesting: Ms. Alexander is warm and wrenching, and Ms. Graham presents a painful picture of a young adult grappling with disillusionment and rage. Gerald Gutierrez directed. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

The Irish . . . and How They Got That Way—This revue by Frank McCourt, author of the best-selling memoir "Angela's Ashes," is a generally good-natured if somewhat choppy amalgam of historical tidbits, quotations from letters and speeches, and Irish songs from the past two centuries, performed by a versatile and charming cast of six singers and musicians. Deftly directed by Charlotte Moore. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

Jails, Hospitals & Hip-Hop—Danny Hoch's new one-man show is a series of short monologues by characters concerned with at least one of the above. Mr. Hoch's versatility is astonishing, and at its best the show is perceptive and very funny. But it should have been honed to a finer edge. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes June 27.)

The Judas Kiss—Liam Neeson portrays Oscar Wilde in David Hare's new drama. Directed by Richard Eyre. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Labor Day—A. R. Gurney has revived a character from "The Cocktail Hour" for this semiautobiographical comedy, about a playwright who tries to revise his latest work during a family holiday. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Menopausal Gentleman—The performance artist Peggy Shaw files a hot flash from the butch-lesbian front, in her latest one-woman show. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 219-3088. Closes June 28.)

Miss Coco Peru's Liquid Universe—A heartfelt series of how-I-got-this-way vignettes written and performed by Miss Coco Peru, otherwise known as Clinton Leupp. The show is occasionally syrupy, and Miss Coco should have given herself more opportunities to show off her terrific singing voice, but her self-aware and self-lacerating humor and her engaging way with a story make this a winning evening. The well-paced direction is by Charles Randolph Wright. Sundays at 8, through June 28. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. Closes June 28.)

Mr. Peters' Connections—Peter Falk returns to the stage to portray a retired pilot in Arthur Miller's new play. (Signature Theatre, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529. Closes June 21.)

Nasty Little Secrets—Lanie Robertson's compelling dark comedy about the sensational life and death of the playwright Joe Orton (Matthew Mabe), who was murdered by his lover, Kenneth Halliwell (Craig Fols). The over-all production, by Primary Stages, is A-O.K., but Robertson's script needs some help: had he sacrificed a bit of thoroughness for focus and hacked an hour off this revision of the 1986 original, he might have polished it down to a gem. (354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes June 14.)

Once in a Lifetime—An Atlantic Theatre Company revival of the 1930 Kaufman and Hart satire—the playwriting team's first collaboration. (336 W. 20th St. 645-1242.)

Power Plays—Three one-act comedies written by and starring Elaine May and Alan Arkin, who are joined by Anthony Arkin and Jeannie Berlin. Presented by Manhattan Theatre Club. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Quidam—The Montreal-based Cirque du Soleil's latest production unfolds like a richly textured, loopy dream, the kind one might slip into after a Fellini-film marathon. All is magical and good in this universe, and enormous fun. (The big top at Battery Park City. For more information, call 800-678-5440.)

Ragtime—E. L. Doctorow's epic novel is transformed into a historical pageant. It's a big, brave, passionate gamble, masterfully directed by Frank Galati. (2/2/98) (Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

R & J—A promising, if not exactly new, idea—schoolboys escape regimentation and discover their own passion by performing "Romeo and Juliet"—yields a few gripping moments surrounded by a lot of overheated panting, shouting, and foot-stomping. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 354-2220.)

Reno Finds Her Mind—The performance artist's latest solo show. (Sullivan Street Lounge, 189 Sullivan St. 420-1999.)

The Seagull—The Blue Light Theatre Company takes on Chekhov's play about actors and writers, and the results are quite rewarding. Under Austin Pendleton's sure-handed direction, Maria Tucci and Greg Naughton turn in strong performances as Arkadina, an aging, self-involved actress, and Konstantin, her tormented, Hamlet-like son; the rest of the cast, which includes Angie Phillips as Nina, does well, too. Using Tom Stoppard's smooth translation, originally done for the Peter Hall Company last year, the production embraces Chekhov's humor along with the pathos. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

Secrets Every Smart Traveler Should Know—In this revue inspired by a Fodor's travel guide, the best songs are the ones that manage to be goofy and savvy at the same time. The show hits turbulence, though, when the humor trades on international stereotypes. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Side Man—The Roundabout Theatre presents Warren Leigh's play about a mid-century big-band musician, which was presented earlier this year at Classic Stage Company. Directed by Michael Mayer. (Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

The Sound of Music—Rebecca Luker is enormously winning as Maria, and the seven children in the cast are mostly delightful, but the production doesn't linger in the memory; there may be music in those hills, but the producers didn't seem to find a whole lot of fresh air up there. (4/6/98) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Symphonie Fantastique—Abstract puppets underwater, set to the music of Berlioz. This isn't rubber-duckie performance art—just as dance can make space a palpable presence onstage, the show's creator, Basil Twist, uses feathers, streamers, mirrors, bubbles, and sophisticated lighting to do the same for water. And, as in dance, the movement illuminates the music. A peerless, delightful summer evening. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Closes June 28.)

A View from the Bridge—The Roundabout Theatre's excellent revival of Arthur Miller's tragic story of the longshoreman Eddie Carbone and his obsession with his orphaned niece. (1/5/98) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Visiting Mr. Green—Eli Wallach finds great dignity in the title character, an eighty-six-year-old Jewish widower, in Jeff Baron's sweet if predictable Upper West Side comedy. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.)

Wait Until Dark—Marisa Tomei and Quentin Tarantino star in a revival of Frederick Knott's 1966 suspense drama. Leonard Foglia is the director. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

LONG RUNS

AS BEES IN HONEY DROWN: Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY STRIKES BACK!:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GROSS INDECENCY: THE THREE TRIALS OF OSCAR WILDE:** Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. . . . **HOWARD CRABTREE'S WHEN PIGS FLY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LAST NIGHT OF BALLYHOO:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200. (Closes June 28.) . . . **LATE NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LIFE:** Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **1776:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **THE SUNSHINE BOYS:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **TITANIC:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 239-6200.

DANCE

New York City Ballet—June 10 at 8: "Jewels.". . . ¶June 11 at 8: "Reliquary," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," the première of "River of Light," and "Stars and Stripes.". . . ¶June 12 at 8: "Chaconne," "Sonatas and Interludes," "Reliquary," and "The Four Seasons.". . . ¶June 13 at 2: "River of Light," "In Memory of . . . ," and "Stars and Stripes.". . . ¶June 13 at 8: "Jewels.". . . ¶June 14 at 3: "Symphony in Three Movements," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "Symphonic Dances," and "Scotch Symphony.". . . ¶June 16 at 8: "Swan Lake," "River of Light," "A Suite of Dances," and "Symphony in Three Movements." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through June 28.)

American Ballet Theatre—June 10 and June 13 at 2 and 8 and June 11-12 and June 15 at 8: "Othello.". . . ¶June 16 at 8: "Giselle." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. Through July 4.)

Philadanco—It's easy to pick out Hope Boykin onstage, because, she says, "I'm the shortest-haired person there is." The contention is only partly true; she is also the tightest turner and the highest jumper. Whatever. Once she catches your eye, it's like watching shadowboxing: she seems to build from sharp accents into fluid rhythms, a style that suits the company's eclectic repertory. For this engagement, the Philadelphia-based troupe presents works by Blondell Cummings, Milton Myers, Gene Hill Sagan, and Ronald K. Brown—and Boykin appears in them all. "I've never been in everything. People say, 'What are you doing?' " She laughs in disbelief. "And I say, 'Everything.' " (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. June 9-12 at 8, June 13 at 2 and 8, and June 14 at 2 and 7:30.)

Noche Flamenca—Just in time for the heat of summer, the premier flamenco ensemble returns to work up a sweat in their downtown stomping grounds. (Theatre 80, at 80 St. Marks Pl. 279-4200. June 13 at 3 and June 16 at 8. Through Aug. 15.)

"Under Renovation"—Janis Brenner & Dancers appear in new and repertory works, including "heartSTRINGS" and "What About Bob," the latter set to the music of Schubert and Bob Dylan, as sung by Dylan, William Shatner, and Sebastian Cabot. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. June 11-14 at 8:30.)

Andrea Del Conte Danza España—The eleven-member company of dancers and musicians, with *cantaor* Jesús Montoya, performs flamenco works. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. June 10-13 at 8.)

ELIZA GRAN

Hope Boykin, of Philadanco.

NIGHT LIFE

TEXACO NEW YORK JAZZ FESTIVAL

The second and final week of this tightly packed and provocative extravaganza. A selective listing follows; a full schedule is available at the Knitting Factory and at www.nyjazzfest.com.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3006)—June 10: The **CHRIS POTTER** band; **SUMMIT CONFERENCE** (with saxophonist **SAM RIVERS,** pianist **JOHN HICKS,** trombonist **JULIAN PRIESTER,** bassist **REGGIE WORKMAN,** and drummer **PHEEROAN AKLAFF**); **DAVE DOUGLAS** (with trumpeter Douglas, drummer **JIM BLACK,** and guitarist **BRAD SHEPIK**). . . . ¶June 11: **BOBBY PREVITE** and the **BUMP THE RENAISSANCE BAND** and the **ERIC REED** trio. . . . ¶June 12: **JANE BUNNETT AND SPIRITS OF HAVANA; MARC RIBOT Y LOS CUBANOS POSTIZOS;** percussionist **LEON PARKER,** solo. . . . ¶June 13: Pianist **FRED HERSCH,** solo, and **SPIRITUALS TO SWING** (with pianist **CYRUS CHESTNUT,** saxophonists **CRAIG HANDY** and **DONALD HARRISON,** guitarist **MARK WHITFIELD,** bassist **RODNEY WHITAKER,** and drummer **CARL ALLEN**). . . . ¶June 14: The **MATT WILSON** quartet; the **MARTY EHRLICH** group; the **MARIO PAVONE** sextet; the brass music of **THOMAS CHAPIN.**

World Financial Center Plaza, West St. at Liberty St.—A free concert by the marvellously understated New Orleans singer and pianist **ALLEN TOUSSAINT.** (June 10 at 6.)

Hudson Tent, Murray St. and North End Ave., Battery Park City—June 11: **GALACTIC;** the **DIRTY DOZEN BRASS BAND; MICHAEL RAY AND KOSMIC KREWE.** . . . ¶June 12: The **HENRY THREADGILL SOCIETY SITUATION DANCE BAND** and **BUTCH MORRIS HOLY GHOST.** . . . ¶June 13: **JOE HENDERSON** and friends; **KEVIN EUBANKS** and the **DAVE HOLLAND** quartet; the **DAVID S. WARE** quartet. (First shows at 7:30. For information, call 219-3006.)

Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St.—The BMI Orchestra 10th-Anniversary Concert, with, among others, saxophonist **PHIL WOODS** and trumpeter **JON FADDIS.** (June 11 at 8. For information, call 219-3006.)

Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St.—Sitarist **RAVI SHANKAR** and saxophonist **RAVI COLTRANE** and his quintet, with Alice Coltrane. (June 14 at 8. For information, call 219-3006.)

JVC JAZZ FESTIVAL NEW YORK

The subtext of the 1998 installment of this quarter-century-old event couldn't be any clearer: ring in the old, ring out the new. Deserving longtime veterans are given their due, while younger practitioners are left out in the cold. Brazilian music dominates the lineup, as though Rio were a part of the tristate area, and pop-diluted jazz rears its insipid head too frequently. The tribute concerts at Kaye Playhouse, two of which take place this week (see below), look to be the best this once exciting festival has to offer.

"Your Feets Too Big: The Music of Fats Waller"—Fats Waller was a pretty funny guy for a musical genius. Saluting the joie de vivre of this pianist, composer, singer, and entertainer are several modern-day mainstream jazz masters, including Ralph Sutton, Clark Terry, Kenny Davern, Al Grey, and Al Casey, along with such outstanding younger acolytes as Warren Vaché and Howard Alden. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. June 15 at 8.)

"To Herb Ellis with Love"—A gaggle of guitarists, from Tal Farlow and John Abercrombie to Charlie Byrd and Andy Summers (of the Police), turns out to salute the legendary Herb Ellis, who, along with bassist Ray Brown (who will also be on hand), was an integral cog in the classic late-fifties trio of pianist Oscar Peterson. Even with all these six-stringers on hand, there should be enough room for the twangy Texan himself to play. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College. June 16 at 8.)

CONCERTS

Beck / Ben Folds Five—The genius collagist of folk, punk, rock, and hip-hop. / Piano-driven pop with a post-punk sensibility. With troubadour Elliott Smith and Quasi. (Jones Beach Theatre. 516-221-1000. June 11 at 7:30.)

Guinness Fleadh—A two-day festival of topflight rock, much of it by Irish bands. Among the featured performers are (on June 13) Sinéad O'Connor, the Chieftains, Chumbawamba, Squeeze, Nanci Griffith, Richard Thompson, Loudon Wainwright, the Saw Doctors, Mary Black, Dar Williams, Luka Bloom, and Susan McKeown; and (on June 14) Tracy Chapman, Indigo Girls, Yo La Tengo, Los Lobos, Wilco, Rosanne Cash, Joe Ely, Patti Smith, John Cale, X, Billy Bragg, Shane MacGowan (formerly of the Pogues), and Black 47. (Downing Stadium, Randall's Island. For information, call 718-330-1234. Gates open at 11 A.M.)

"The Greatest Hits of Jerome Kern"—Part of the Lyrics & Lyricists series. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. June 13 at 8, June 14 at 2:30 and 8, and June 15 at 2 and 8.)

Kraftwerk—The much hyped "electronica" revolution turned out to be the musical equivalent of "Godzilla" (big, expensive, toothless); now this German synthesizer combo is back to show everyone where the idea came from. Long before Devo, Kraftwerk turned robotic personas, crisp pinball bleeps, and ticky-tacky drum machines into a signature sound that had little precedent in rock. The band still sounds fresh, and its influence is immeasurable. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. June 13 at 9.)

"Caravan: An Adventure with the Latin Jazz Genius of Duke Ellington and Juan Tizol"—Valve trombonist Juan Tizol, an often overlooked standout with the old Ellington orchestra, might have been considered one of the premier jazz composers had he not found himself in the shadows of Billy Strayhorn and the Duke himself. Tizol, who joined Ellington's band in 1929 and stayed, on and off, until the early sixties, wrote two of the most durable Ellington-associated tunes: "Caravan" and "Perdido." Trombonist Steve Turre leads a tribute to this Latin jazz pioneer, and he's assisted by saxophonist Frank Wess, pianist Stanley Cowell, trombonist Britt Woodman, percussionist Mongo Santamaria, and drummer Victor Lewis. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. June 13 at 9:30.)

Stevie Nicks / Boz Scaggs—The Good Witch of Rock, now firmly ensconced in an emeritus position, comes fluttering into town. Without the ensemble support of Fleetwood Mac, Nicks is an uneven performer, but even if her voice doesn't hold up, she's good for a spell or two. / The silky-smooth seventies soft-rocker. (Jones Beach Theatre. June 14 at 8.)

Natalie Merchant—She whirls, she mewls, she does everything but swing a shawl: the Clinton Administration's answer to Stevie Nicks (see above) unveils her latest enervating opus, "Ophelia." (Supper Club, 240 W. 47th St. 921-1940. June 14 at 8.)

Harry Belafonte—The ageless entertainer. (Whitman Theatre, Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts, Brooklyn College. 718-951-4500. June 15 at 8.)

"The Concert"—A benefit concert staging of the musical "Sweet Charity," starring, among many others, Debbie Allen, Donna McKechnie, Bebe Neuwirth, Chita Rivera, and Gwen Verdon. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. June 15 at 8.)

"Carnegie Hall Celebrates the Music of Judy Garland"—A two-concert tribute hosted by Lorna Luft, with scheduled performances by Elaine Stritch, Robert Morse, Weslia Whitfield, Betty Comden and Adolph Green, Robert Goulet, and Jack Jones. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. June 16-17 at 7:30.)

Pulp—Of all David Bowie's musical progeny, no act captures his electric insouciance better than Jarvis Cocker and Pulp. Cocker sometimes pushes the foppy shtick a bit too far, but he's so much smarter than most modern pop stars that you can't blame him for being snippy. With the bizarre art-hop collective Bran Van 3000. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center. June 16 at 8.)

CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Acme Underground, 9 Great Jones St. (677-6963)—Neo-folkie **PATTI ROTHBERG** drops in on June 12.

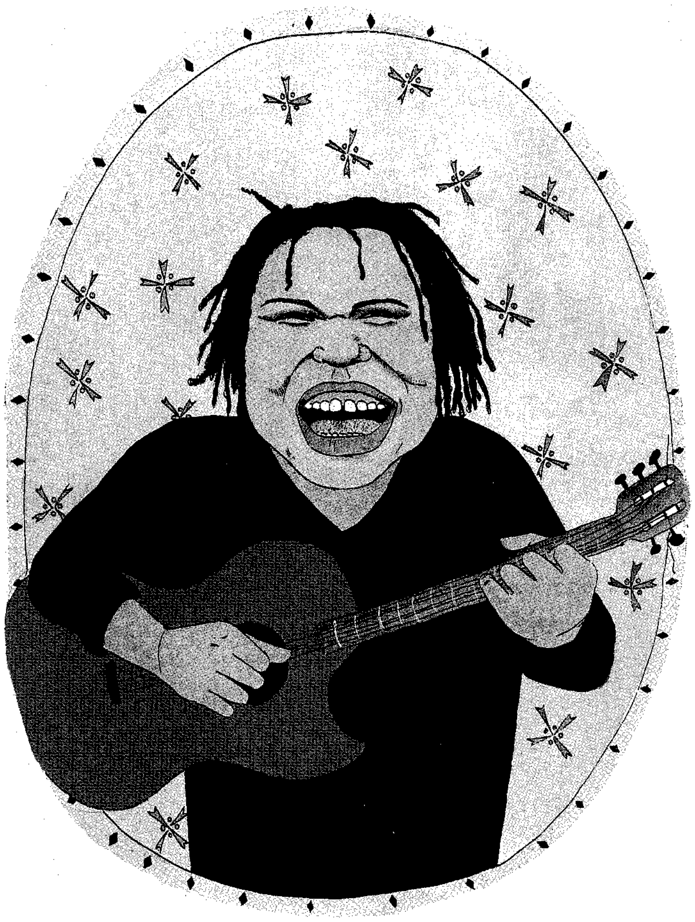
Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—June 12: A knack for jangly pop melodies rescues **ROBYN HITCHCOCK** from what would otherwise be willful quirkiness.

Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—A sparkling new venue from the good folks at Mercury Lounge. June 10: **LLOYD COLE AND THE NEGATIVES,** fronted by the dark, frequently brilliant Scottish singer. With **GREG GARING,** who crosses traditional country and bluegrass with a digital-sampling mind-set. June 11: The Italian-and-Japanese avant pop of **BLONDE REDHEAD.** June 12: Led by femme-fatale vocalist Jennifer Charles, the downtown combo **ELYSIAN FIELDS** plays what might best be described as erotic jazz. With **FIREWATER.** June 13: **IVY,** a low-key power-pop outfit featuring Adam Schlesinger, of the equally appealing Fountains of Wayne, and the dreamy vocals of Dominique Durand. With **KOMEDA.** June 16: **TUATARA,** an indie-rock instrumental supergroup featuring members of R.E.M. and Screaming Trees.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—June 10: **MIMI GOESE,** the former front woman of the eighties minimalist outfit Hugo Largo, comes in for a month of Wednesdays with a new band and songs from her début album, "Soak." Downtown guitar gods **MARC RIBOT** and **ELLIOTT SHARP** lend some noise. June 12-13: The **LOSER'S LOUNGE** pays playful homage to the music of Paul McCartney. June 15-16: **TOSHI REAGON** presents her "Summer Fun Fest." This fierce and uncompromising singer's shows are celebratory—a shower of retro funk, urban blues, and folk—and they're all sung with evangelical fervor. To hear her is to believe. With the up-and-coming Swedish singer **EBBA FORSBERG.** The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—June 12: South Carolina rocker **EDWIN MC CAIN** and Northwest folk-popper **PETE DROGE.** June 13: **CULTURE,** the veteran Jamaican vocal trio led by Joseph Hill. June 15: The uneven British techno-rock band **CURVE** has re-formed, hoping for a burst of creativity. Show up early for the **DANDY WARHOLS,** a Portland, Oregon, combo that makes psychedelic tinfoil pop (e.g., "Lou Weed") with the decadence of the sixties-era Factory. Front man Courtney Taylor, all pout and pursed lips, is a thing to behold.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—June 12: Local upstarts **LES SAVY FAV,** fronted by the charismatic Gibb Slife. June 15: The Canadian folksinger **HAYDEN.** June 16: Cuddly pop with **LETTERS TO CLEO.**



Toshi Reagon brings her "Summer Fun Fest" to Fez.

LARA TOMLIN

Shine, 285 West Broadway, at Canal St. (941-0900)—Japanese noise-rocker **CORNELIUS** holds forth on June 11.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—June 12: Soca legend the **MIGHTY SPARROW.** Dining.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—June 11: **MERLE HAGGARD.** A rare club performance by the grizzled, ornery master of drivin', drinkin', and thinkin' songs. With the great country singer, songwriter, and former Outlaw **BILLY JOE SHAVER.** June 12-13: The **METERS.** Founded in the mid-sixties by keyboardist Art Neville, this strutting gumbo band is to New Orleans R. & B. what the MGs are to Memphis soul—the real thing.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Vocalist **SUSANNAH MC CORKLE** is currently at work in the Oak Room. Dining.

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—June 10-13: **BOBBY WATSON,** the intrepid altoist, has spent the past few years investigating new routes, but now we can be thankful that he's reassembled **HORIZON,** always an invigorating forum for his neo-bop conceptions. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through June 14: Vocalist **ABBEY LINCOLN** and her trio. Dining.

Café Pierre, 2 E. 61st St. (940-8185)—Vocalist-pianist **KATHLEEN LANDIS,** in "Things Are Looking Up," a tribute to George Gershwin. Through Aug. 1. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—**BOBBY SHORT** has come home for a two-month stay. . . . ¶ Across the hall, pianist **BARBARA CARROLL** is in charge at Bemelmans Bar.

FireBird Café, 363 W. 46th St. (586-0244)—Pianist and singer **STEVE ROSS** performs a show of Cole Porter tunes through June 20.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through June 14: **STEVE LACY** issues melodic lines from his soprano saxophone as if he were wielding a laser beam: notes land precisely where they should in a methodical, seemingly inevitable pattern. That he infuses everything with such passion is the magic element of an art he's been honing since his days as a wunderkind in the fifties. Lacy's focus here is the work of Thelonious Monk; no wonder, since he's been dissecting Monk's compositions now for more than forty years. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.**

Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—As musical director of Arsenio Hall's defunct show, pianist **MICHAEL WOLFF** (through June 14) would set the grooves, keep the audience pumped, and laugh at his boss's jokes. Now that's paying your dues. He now limits his repartee to affable interaction with his bandmates.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—June 10-13: Like an old married couple, the engaging pianist **JOANNE BRACKEEN** and her longtime colleague, the revered bassist **CECIL MC BEE,** seem to complete each other's musical sentences.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—**PETE (LA ROCA) SIMS AND SWINGTIME** are on hand through June 14. Drummer Sims stood in the first row of the second rank when he was coming up in the sixties, but now he's firmly ensconced in the big leagues. He leads a spirited hard-bop band featuring saxophonists **JOE FORD** and **DON BRADEN,** trumpeter **JIMMY OWENS,** and pianist **STEVE KUHN.** Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through June 14: New York hasn't seen a pianist the calibre of **CHUCHO VALDÉS** for quite some time. The past two years found the Cuban citizen making brief, electrifying visits, but this is his first full-fledged United States club date. Attendance is mandatory for all listeners willing to accept international jazz talent that mops the floor with our homegrown variety. Pianists are warned, though: Valdés, a terrifying conglomeration of Art Tatum, Cecil Taylor, Bill Evans, and countless less familiar Cuban virtuosos, is capable of making you wish you had never been born. If any show should divert you from the Texaco New York Jazz Festival, this is it. (**NOTE:** At press time, it was unclear, owing to visa problems, when Valdés would begin this two-week gig; it's advisable to call the club for an update.) The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Through June 13: The jazz clarinet has been injected with new life by virtuosos like Ken Peplowski and Marty Ehrlich, but the standard remains **KENNY DAVERN.** For forty years he's tapped into the spirits of licorice-stick iconoclasts such as Pee Wee Russell by tempering a quirky individualism with sterling technique. He's accompanied here by **JOHN BUNCH** (piano), **BUCKY PIZZARELLI** (guitar), and **TONY DI NICOLA** (drums). Dining.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Ellsworth Kelly on the Roof," an installation of large-scale metal sculptures in the Cantor roof garden. . . . ¶ "Elegant China Ware: Paris Porcelain in America." Through June 14. . . . ¶ "Honoré Lannuier, Parisian Cabinetmaker in Federal New York." Through June 14. . . . ¶ "American Ingenuity" features work-to-evening outfits by Anne Klein, Claire McCardell, Bill Blass, and others. At the Costume Institute, through Aug. 16. . . . ¶ "The Nature of Islamic Ornament, Part One: Calligraphy." Through June 28. . . . ¶ "Jean Dunand: Master of Art Deco." Through Oct. 25. . . . ¶ "The Paintings of Judith Rothschild: An Artist's Search." Through Sept. 6. . . . ¶ "Native Paths: American Indian Art from the Collection of Charles and Valerie Diker." (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"Projects 63: Karin Davie, Udomsak Krisanamis, Bruce Pearson, Fred Tomaselli." It's no secret that opticality—the sensorially rich overload of color, pattern, and apparent pulsation—is making a big comeback. The artists in the latest installment of the Modern's Projects series are part of this resurgence; they all seem eager to please, and for the most part their pictures deliver the expected wallop. Davie is perhaps the most conventional—she paints in good old oil on canvas. The others all opt for eccentric materials: Pearson favors lumpy wedges of Styrofoam; Tomaselli encases marijuana leaves and controlled pharmaceuticals, etc., in thick resin varnishes; and Krisanamis experiments with collages made from supermarket receipts, tea-stained newspapers, and even cellophane noodles. A striking and rewarding exhibition, although not one that would delight the late High Modern priest of opticality, Clement Greenberg. Through June 30. . . . ¶ "The Clutter of Happenstance: Photographs by Robert Cumming." Through June 23. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—"Unknown Terrain: The Landscapes of Andrew Wyeth" is the first exhibition devoted strictly to the landscapes of the immensely popular—and occasionally maligned—painter. Through Aug. 30. . . . ¶ A survey of the work of Conceptualist Charles Ray. Through Aug. 30. . . . ¶ "The Studio Within" is a Disneyesque mockup of Richard Pousette-Dart's last atelier (in a carriage house in Suffern, New York), which, for hokey verisimilitude, lacks only an animated likeness of the late Abstract Expressionist flinging some paint around. Still, it's worth a look, if only for the diary pages, the queer white sculptures in the eaves, and several fine paintings, like the bubblegum impasto of "Amalfa" (1962). Through Sept. 13. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Masters of Color and Light: Homer, Sargent, and the American Watercolor Movement" showcases more than a hundred and fifty works from the museum's extensive collection. Through Aug. 23. . . . ¶ "Jewels of the Romanovs: Treasures of the Russian Imperial Court" displays crown jewels and other baubles, including the most celebrated sapphire in the world (before Kate Winslet's), a 260-carat specimen given by Alexander II to his wife. Through July 5. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays, 11 to 9; and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park (718-592-9700)—Like Jerry Seinfeld, Robert Colescott's raucous, densely colorful paintings use insults to entertain. By turns ugly and gorgeous, these recent pictures by the seventy-year-old artist (the United States contribution to last year's Venice Biennale, and the first by an African-American) take on topics from miscegenation to Alexandre Dumas's Haitian heritage. Their layover at the suburban Queens Museum comes equipped with wall texts offering definitions of stereotypes and satire, etc., the better to ease newcomers into Colescott's scathing wit. Through Aug. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

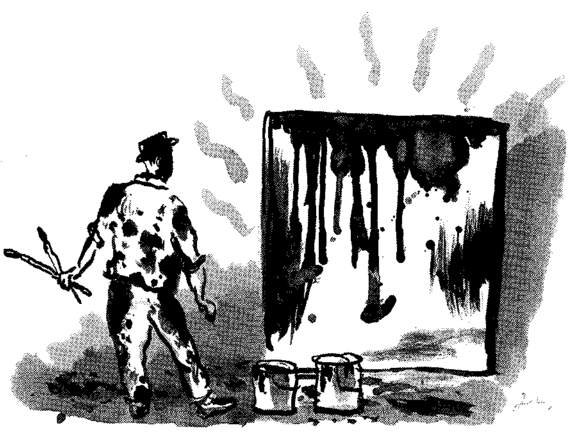
GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Marsden Hartley (1877-1943)—"The earth is all I know of wonder," Hartley wrote, citing the motto of American transcendentalists since Thoreau. This well-chosen show chronicles the painter's wanderings—corporeal, spiritual, and stylistic—with examples ranging from an earth-toned "Indian Fantasy," painted in Berlin in 1914, to "Murals for an Arcane Library," inspired by Mexican iconography. The travelogue-style texts on the gallery walls enhance one's appreciation of Hartley's better-known sinuous landscapes and Cubist-inspired still-lifes. Through June 20. (Babcock, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 767-1852.)

Rebecca Horn—Like her American counterpart Sherrie Levine, this German sculptor and installation artist creates work that relies on a web of academic theory to complete its metaphors: without the help of art historians, we'd never know that Horn's scattershot array of thatched beehives, broken mirrors, and buzzing sounds ("Bees Planetary Map") is meant to be a treatise on "migration and refugee displacement." Less enlightened viewers will fare better in the back gallery, where a motorized sculpture with an elegant Dadaist edge ("The Bee Leaf") mimics the act of pollination. Through June 13. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Open Mondays.)

Reginald Marsh (1898-1954)—Marsh is an acquired taste, like overripe cheese. His painterly obsession with mannish women can be off-putting, but it adds texture to his scenes of old New York, such as his tempera "B.M.T., Fourteenth Street" (1932), in which a cadre of furred and coifed Amazons subdue the subway bustle seemingly via sheer womanliness. This show marks the centennial of Marsh's birth with paintings and prints from 1928 to 1946, when the artist toiled as an illustrator for *The New Yorker* and as a theatre-curtain designer for the Greenwich Village Follies. Through June 18. (ACA, 41 E. 57th St. 644-8300.)



GERARD NICOLAS

Isamu Noguchi (1904-88)—This American sculptor, who balanced the yin and yang of fine art and home décor, continues to mystify. He counters a trite knickknack like "Endless Coupling" (1988), depicting two red-granite dog bones in flagrante, with "Nameless" (1982-83), a half egg of basalt hewn in three parts, the surfaces polished to reveal the essence of the stone. And then there are the famous mirror-smooth basalt and granite fountains: three of his tables are here, overflowing magically into the gallery floor. Through June 26. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292.)

Tom Wesselmann—The erstwhile Pop artist, whose super-smooth paintings of faceless women with Coppertone tan lines made a splash in the sixties, would seem an unlikely convert to the brand of corporate-lobby abstraction that seduced Stella and Lichtenstein. Still, there it is: a series of collages of colorful, cut-aluminum brushstrokes, which, after reflection, aren't too great a leap from his old work. Only a few, like the flashy, melon-colored "Pink Pearl" (1998), hint at his jauntier youth. Through June 13. (Janis, 110 W. 57th St. 586-0110.)

Short List—**diane andrews hall** and **guy pène du bois,** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 535-5767. Both shows through June 26. . . . **paul klee,** Krugier, 41 E. 57th St. 755-7288. Through July 23. . . . **david levine,** Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545. Through June 12. . . . **rosana palazyan,** Adams, 41 W. 57th St. 644-5665. Through June 19. . . . **edward henry potthast,** Peters, 24 E. 78th St. 628-9760. Through June 20. . . . **tom shannon,** Yoshii, 20 W. 57th St. 265-8876. Through June 13. . . . **joan snyder,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810. Through June 12. . . . **frank stella,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550. Through June 26. . . . **joseph stella,** York, 21 E. 65th St. 772-9155. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through June 30.

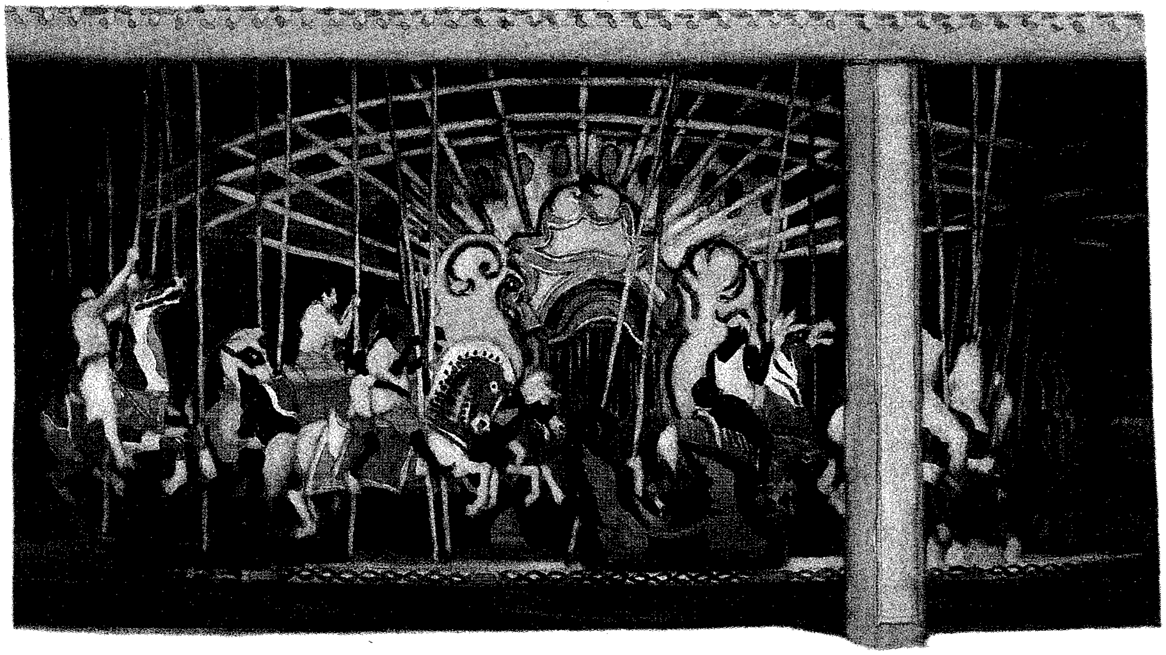
GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Larry Johnson—After a hiatus of several years, this L.A.-based artist with pronounced affinities with both Conceptualism and Pop has returned to New York with a startling show keyed to the topography of Los Angeles (both the social scene and the cityscape). These splashy and exciting works are, strictly speaking, photographs, although their judicious use of computer manipulation and drawing largely removes them from the realm of conventional photography. Through June 27. (I-20, at 529 W. 20th St. 645-1100.)

Ellsworth Kelly—Two shows, one utterly extraordinary, the other simply very good. "Sculpture for a Large Wall, 1957" (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St.) has been restored and installed to stunning effect. The work, a hundred and four anodized panels, eleven feet high and sixty-five feet long, salvaged recently from a Greyhound bus terminal in Philadelphia slated for destruction, remains one of the most important in Kelly's career. It marks an aesthetic turning point, from the grid-based Paris-period works of the early fifties to the shaped canvases and reliefs that have since preoccupied him, several new examples of which can be seen at Marks, 523 W. 24th St. Both shows through June 20. (For more information, call 243-0200.)

Richard Prince—A very odd selection of new, often large-scale drawings by one of the pioneers of appropriation art. Each picture here is a kind of portrait with fragments of seemingly random text (shopping lists, jokes, rock lyrics, etc.) floating around the central image of a dolorous, somewhat corny face. Painterly flourishes are amply indulged, although the degree of irony in such marks remains obscure. Through July 31. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 206-9300.)

Jane and Louise Wilson—"Stasi City," two wall projections and a suite of related large-scale photographic stills. The artists are fraternal twins, and their works have often addressed problems of duality; in this installation, it's the formerly divided East and West Berlin, which they depict in eerie travelogues through government buildings such as the seemingly abandoned offices of East Germany's dreaded intelligence service, the Stasi. The sisters make occasional appearances, as ghostlike and foreboding as the creepy interiors they inhabit. Through July 11. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121.)



"Carousel" (1995), one of the works in an exhibition of watercolors by David Levine, at Forum.

Short List—**TONY BELLAVER,** Martz, 529 W. 20th St. 206-3686. Through June 27. . . . **FERNANDO CANOVAS,** Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. 741-8695. Through June 24. . . . **MEREDITH DANLUCK,** Kreps, 529 W. 20th St. 741-8849. Through June 13. . . . **NANCY DWYER,** Cristinerose, 529 W. 20th St. 206-0297. Through June 20. . . . **ARTHUR GANSON,** Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through June 30. . . . **MAXIMILIAN GOLDFARB,** Clementine, 526 W. 26th St. 243-5937. Through June 20. . . . **PETER KLARE** and **TOM MARTINELLI,** Eller, 529 W. 20th St. 206-6411. Both shows through June 27. . . . **TONY OURSLER AND MIKE KELLEY,** Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100. Through Sept. 12. . . . **DAVID REED,** Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999. Through July 3. . . . **THOMAS TROSCH,** Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555. Through June 19. . . . **ANDREA ZITTEL,** Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000. Through July 10.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Eleanor Antin / Mierle Laderman Ukeles—Two artists who adapted the nonhierarchical strategies of Conceptual art to feminist ends. Antin's "Portraits of 8 New York Women" (1970), originally shown in the Chelsea Hotel, portrays famous women as Pop-Conceptual assemblages of consumer goods (Margaret Mead appears as a director's chair, binoculars, umbrella, and Thermos). Laderman Ukeles's decade-long "Maintenance Art" project (1969-79) is revisited via archival material, which presents records she kept of household activities (like cleaning and child care) as art. Through June 13. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232.)

Jane Kaplowitz / Dave Muller—Wall drawings and works on paper by two artists interested in different sorts of media-generated imagery. Muller's images of gallery announcements traverse the well-trodden paths of self-referential institutional critique, albeit with visual aplomb. Kaplowitz dilates on the iconic figure of Robert De Niro in "Taxi Driver"; her images are often lush yet acidic in their coloristic flourishes, and the two wall-scaled pieces have an uncanny gravity. Through July 24. (Marcus, 578 Broadway. 226-3200.)

Wolfgang Laib—"Nowhere—Everywhere," a smashing exhibition by this German sculptor. Laib uses natural materials—in this show, beeswax, hazelnut pollen, marble, and rice—to create sculptures of mute yet palpable force. Also, the beeswax smells divine. Through June 13. (Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. 431-3685.)

Short List—**CARLOS ANDRADE,** Malca, 580 Broadway. 966-8854. Through June 15. . . . **CHRISTOPHER BROWN,** Thorp, 103 Prince St. 431-6880. Through June 13. . . . **REG BUTLER,** Kent, 67 Prince St. 966-4500. Through June 20. . . . **ANGIE ENG,** A.I.R., 40 Wooster St. 966-0799. Through June 20. . . . **AMY JENKINS,** Kustera, 41 Wooster St. 965-1527. Through June 13. . . . **MIKE KELLEY AND TONY OURSLER,** Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753. Through July 31. . . . **BALDER OLRIK,** Deven Golden, 16 Mercer St. 334-3124. Through June 20. . . . **IZHAR PATKIN,** Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St. 941-5777. Through June 13. . . . **GEORGE PECK,** Trans Hudson, 416 W. 13th St. 242-3232. Through June 13. . . . **REBECCA PURDUM,** Tilton, 49 Greene St. 941-1775. Through June 13. . . . **MARC QUINN,** Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828. Through July 2. . . . **ALESSANDRO TWOMBLY,** Kasmin, 74 Grand St. 219-3219. Through June 27.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Christie's—June 10: Jewelry. . . . ¶ June 11: Twentieth-century decorative pieces, including furnishings by Stickley, numerous glass pieces by Gallé and Daum, and fifteen Tiffany lamps. . . . ¶ June 11-12: Fine and collectible wines. . . . ¶ June 15-16: The second installment of the three-part sale of the Haskell F. Norman Library of Science and Medicine, which is strong in presentation, dedication, and association copies. This sale ranges from classic seventeenth-century volumes by Newton and Galileo to Mesmer's doctoral thesis on animal magnetism. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.) . . . At **CHRISTIE'S EAST:** June 11: Moderately priced jewelry. . . . ¶ June 16: Furniture, decorative art works, and silver. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0400.)

Sotheby's—June 11: Russian art works, including porcelain, bronzes, jewelry, and icons. . . . ¶ June 12: Decorative works in the Art Nouveau and Art Deco styles. . . . ¶ June 13: A wide-ranging auction of collectibles, including antique toys and Hollywood memorabilia. . . . ¶ June 16-17: A sale of Americana, especially notable for examples of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania furniture. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Michael Ackerman—"Smoke," a new series of photographs taken in Cabbagetown, an old industrial neighborhood in Atlanta. Through July 28. (Bodell, 13 E. 7th St. 477-1820. Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 7, and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Emmet Gowin—For nearly two decades this master image-maker and printer has been taking aerial pictures of the American landscape which present, among other things, the beautiful geometry of pivot irrigation, the scary reality of missile silos in the middle of the heartland, the waste of strip-mining, and the devastation of underground nuclear testing. Through June 13. (Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999.)

David Malin—A comet (Halley's), nebulae (Horsehead, Orion, Crab), galaxies (Sombrero, M83), and a supernova (1987A) are just some of the cosmic phenomena that vie for your attention in this good-looking show of large color work by a veteran astrophotographer. Malin shoots not from the Hubble but from a mountaintop observatory in Australia; his pioneering, complex techniques reproduce as exactly as possible the true visible-light colors of the cosmos. Through June 20. (Schickler, 560 Broadway. 431-6363.)

Michael Prince—The artist's first solo show consists of small prints that employ soft focus and often a short depth of field, so that, for instance, the shoulders of a small boy are in focus, but his face and wide open mouth are not. With deft assuredness, Prince abstracts everyday scenes into emblems of menace, fear, and joy. Through June 13. (Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.)

Dan Weiner (1919-59)—More than fifty photographs (most of them vintage prints) from the forties and fifties by a photojournalist who had a great influence on the work of Robert Frank, Garry Winogrand, and Lee Friedlander. Weiner doesn't idealize postwar America, but he's not as desolate as Frank was, either; he captures the urban masses in clear-eyed images that are perfectly balanced between pathos and bathos. Through June 13. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

"Inventors + Alchemists"—A group show of contemporary tintypes, photographs, and other objects. Through June 14. (Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Open Sundays, noon to 5.)

"Magnificent Joints"—Seventy-five vintage photographs and daquerreotypes of skeletons, skulls, and other anatomical subject matter. Through July 4. (Kasher, 54 North

Moore St. 966-3978. Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6.)

"Police Pictures: The Photograph As Evidence"—An exhibition of nearly a hundred anonymous photographs interspersed with works by Gardner, Atget, Riis, and Weegee. Through July 18. (Grey Art Gallery, 100 Washington Sq. E. 998-6780. Open Wednesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown—"Comparative Concepts: Photographs by August Sander, Karl Blossfeldt, Albert Renger-Patzsch, and Bernd and Hilla Becher." Through Sept. 13. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**SANDI FELLMAN**, Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070. Through June 27. . . . **DAVID GOLDES**, Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255. Through June 28. . . . **LINDA MC CARTNEY**, Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Through July 2. . . . **FRANK MAJORE**, Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166. Through June 26. . . . **DIDIER MASSARD**, Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747. Through July 3. . . . **HERBERT MATTER**, Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway, 966-6223 (through July 11); and New York Studio School, 8 W. 8th St. 673-6466 (open Mondays; through June 27). . . . **SCOTT MORGAN**, Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through June 27. . . . **LUIS GONZÁLEZ PALMA** and **JACQUES HENRI LARTIGUE**, Danziger, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 734-5300. Both shows through June 27. . . . **TOSHIO SHIBATA**, Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220. Through July 10. . . . **RAGHUBIR SINGH**, Feature, 76 Greene St. 941-7077. Through June 27. . . . **ANTONIO TUROK**, Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. 505-5555. Through June 21. . . . **JO ANN VERBURG**, Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223. Through June 27. . . . **LEIGH WIENER**, Witkin, 415 West Broadway. 925-5510. Through June 13.

(See the museum listings for a photography exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—The company's free outdoor performances begin with a concert version of "Il Trovatore," featuring soprano June Anderson, mezzo-soprano Larissa Diadkova, tenor Fabio Armiliato, and baritone Haijing Fu. Marco Armiliato (the tenor's brother) conducts. (Central Park's Great Lawn. June 16 at 8. For rain-date information, call 362-6000.)

American Chamber Opera Company—Douglas Anderson conducts the première of his opera "My Year, My Life" (based on the story "Oraga Haru," by the Japanese haiku poet Issa), featuring baritone David Stoneman, as well as a staging of Schoenberg's "Pierrot Lunaire," performed in English by countertenor Daniel Gundlach. (Theatre of the Riverside Church, W. 120th St. at Riverside Dr. June 11-12 and June 15-16, all at 8. For information about tickets, call 781-0857.)

Voice & Vision Theatre—This theatre company, which specializes in works by and about women, presents the final performances of Ruth Schonthal's "Jocasta," an opera that retells Sophocles' Oedipus story from the mother's point of view. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St. June 11 and June 13 at 8. For information about tickets, call 279-4200.)

Amato Opera Company—Presenting "Don Pasquale," in English. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. June 12-13 at 7:30 and June 14 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

Musica Sacra—Richard Westenburg directs the chorus and orchestra in Bach's Cantatas No. 47, No. 62, No. 72, and No. 93. (Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, Fifth Ave. at 55th St. June 12 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 315-1936.)

Bachanalia Chamber Orchestra—The ensemble performs Bach's "Brandenburg" Concertos No. 1 and No. 2, Barber's Serenade for String Orchestra, and Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante in E-Flat Major (K. 364, with violinist Nina Beilina and violist Brett Deubner.) (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. June 12 at 8. For information about tickets, call 239-5906.)

Brooklyn Philharmonic—Helmuth Rilling conducts the orchestra and six amateur choruses in an all-Brahms program, comprising his "Nänie," "Schicksalslied," and "Ein Deutsches Requiem." (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. June 14 at 2.)

Goldman Memorial Band—The ensemble opens its eighty-first season with two go-rounds of a program that includes Holst's "Military Suite" No. 1, Shostakovich's "Festive Overture," and Sousa's "George Washington Bicentennial March." David Eaton, the group's newly appointed music director, conducts. (New York Botanical Garden, Bronx Park. June 14 at 2. No tickets required beyond garden entrance. . . . ¶ Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. June 14 at 7. No tickets necessary.)

Rottenberg Chorale—Elayne Robinson Grossman leads Meira Maxine Warshauer's "We Are Dreamers," selections from Paul Ben-Haim's "Kabbalat Shabbat," and works by Ben Steinberg, Yehezkel Braun, and David Burger. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 501-3330. June 16 at 8.)

RECITALS

Judith Sainte Croix—Fourteen musicians and a dancer team up for a program of this composer's recent solo and chamber works, all of which are inspired by Native American music and culture. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 501-3330. June 10 at 8.)

Bargemusic—June 11 at 7:30 and June 14 at 2: Violinist Carmit Zori, cellist Stephen Balderston, and pianist Pedja Muzijevic perform Dvořák's F-Minor Piano Trio, and vio-

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list Paul Neubauer completes the ensemble for Schumann's Piano Quartet. . . . ¶ June 12 at 7:30: Solo and chamber works by Schumann, Penderecki, Takemitsu, and Liszt, performed by Messrs. Neubauer, Balderston, and Muzijevic. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

"Guitar Among Others"—The ninth season of this series of guitar-oriented chamber music concludes with performances of crossover works for various combinations of flute, percussion, piano, double-bass, and—of course—guitar: Claude Bolling's "Picnic Suite," Jim Skinger's "Just for Friends," and six pieces that Laurindo Almeida composed in the nineteen-sixties for a bossa-nova-and-jazz-fusion ensemble. (St. Luke In-the-Fields. 487 Hudson St., at Grove St. June 11 at 8. For information about tickets, call 718-788-1988.)

Nándor Szederkényi—The violinist, a past winner of the International Szigeti Violin Competition and the Canadian Broadcasting Company's National Radio Auditions, performs a recital that includes Stravinsky's Duo Concertante and sonatas by Dohnányi and Prokofiev; pianist Sylvia Shadick-Taylor assists. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. June 11 at 8.)

Alyssa Reit—The harpist is joined by several colleagues in a program that includes Norman Dello Joio's "Three Bagatelles," Handel's Harp Concerto in B-Flat Major, a group of Spanish Renaissance dances, and Reit's own "Freedom Variations." (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. June 12 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

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LISTENING BOOTH

The Royal Shakespeare Company's recent visit to town has reminded audiences of just how seamlessly the bard could weave music into his plays. Songs from Shakespeare have long been represented on recordings; a small stack of new issues explores the repertoire through the prism of the historical-performance movement. On **HARK! HARK! THE LARK!: MUSIC FOR SHAKESPEARE'S COMPANY** (Hyperion), Peter Holman leads the Parley of Instruments and a quartet of pure-voiced soloists in thirty-four songs and instrumental numbers (by Robert Johnson, William Lawes, and others) written expressly for late Shakespeare plays and for stage works by Fletcher, Jonson, Middleton, and others of his contemporaries. Holman's interpretative bias leans toward florid ornamentation, which his agile performers accomplish with polite elegance. An earthier approach informs the Baltimore Consort's **THE LADYES DELIGHT** (Dorian), which includes several numbers that were used in Shakespeare's plays, as well as other incidental pieces that have a similar musical and dramatic language. Few early-music players have more fun making music than the Baltimore seven, who, through their performances, take the position that echoes of Renaissance secular music are still to be found in modern folk practice; for example, they end a piece from the Jane Pickering Lute Book of 1616 with an amusing bluegrass interpolation. Custer LaRue, the group's singer, makes a seventeenth-century lullaby seem as if it wouldn't be at all out of place sung over a twentieth-century crib, and the piece's prolongated title reveals its timeless topicality: "The New Balow; or a Wenche's Lamentation for the loss of her Sweet-heart, he having left her with a Babe to play her, being the Fruits of her Folly." A year ago, Philips Classics released two memorable disks—**THE MASQUE OF OBERON** (a 1611 Ben Jonson theatre piece) and **SHAKESPEARE'S MUSIC** (a recital of music from the plays)—with Philip Pickett directing the Musicians of the Globe (the Globe Theatre's house band) in an acoustic that suggests a real theatrical space. Two follow-up albums are expected imminently; we're especially eager to catch **THE ENCHANTED ISLAND: MUSIC FOR A RESTORATION "TEMPEST."**

Sundays on the Island—Soprano Natasha Steinhardt and pianist Ilan Rechtman offer songs by Brahms, Wolf, and Poulenc; pianist Eri Ikezi performs several sonatas by Scarlatti and Grandos's "Allegro di Concierto" in C Major. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. June 14 at noon. For information about tickets, call 718-885-2478.)

Jerusalem Piano Trio—The ensemble's members—vioinist Ariel Shamai, cellist Iris Regev, and pianist Ilan Rechtman—perform duets by Glière and trios by Haydn. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. June 14 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Julia Migenes—The sopranoprovides the entertainment for a dinner concert, with pianist Victoria Kirsch assisting. (Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. 840-6800. June 14 at 6:30.)

Kirsten Agresta—Performing works for solo harp, by Fauré, Britten, and others. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. June 15 at 8.)

Beethoven Trios—Violinist Yoval Waldman (formerly the concertmaster of the New Orleans Symphony), cellist Iris Regev, and pianist Ilan Rechtman perform Beethoven's Piano Trios in G Major (Op. 1, No. 2) and C Minor (Op. 1, No. 3). (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. June 15 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Peepshow—Merry Conway and Noni Pratt, two artists who specialize in large-scale installations and whose work has been described as "archeology of the female psyche," have turned a twelve-thousand-square-foot former furniture showroom into a walk-through multimedia performance/installation called "A Woman's Work Is Never Done." Visitors are invited to examine two thousand donated household objects (grocery lists, wedding photos, bottles of glycerine) while a harpist and a clarinettist perform and ten actors, including Pratt and Conway, create changing tableaux (peeling parsnips, appearing as nineteen-fifties housewives, participating in a pageant of Eves). According to Pratt, it's all about putting the "different aspects of being female in a public landscape." (200 Hudson St. Wednesdays through Saturdays at 8 and 9:15 and Sundays at 2 and 3:15. Through June 21. For reservations, call 334-9365.)

Borough of Coronations—Actors Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson are crowned the King and Queen of Brooklyn at the sixteenth annual Welcome Back to Brooklyn Festival. They are joined by other erstwhile and current Brooklynites, including author Frank McCourt, radio host Leonard Lopate, essayist Phillip Lopate, the R. & B. group the Persuasions, and the band the Brooklyn Funk Essentials. (Grand Army Plaza, Brooklyn. June 14, noon to 6. For more information, call 718-855-7882, ext. 54.)

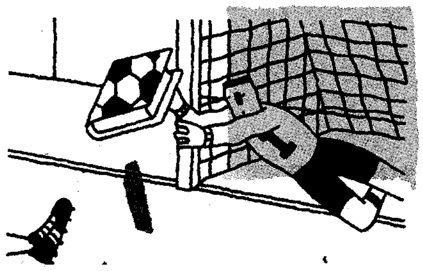
Readings—June 11 at 7:30: By actors Pauline Flanagan and Neil Bradley, W. B. Yeats Society of New York vice president Don Bates, *Times* editor Howell Raines, and others, from the poetry of W. B. Yeats. (Barnes & Noble, 33 E. 17th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ June 16, starting at 7: Blair Brown, Malachy McCourt, Maria Tucci, and other actors join radio host Isaiah Sheffer and translator Robert Fagles for a Bloomsday reading from Fagles's translation of the Odyssey and James Joyce's "Ulysses." (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)

Talks—June 15 at 7:30: Lincoln Center Theatre dramaturge Anne Cattaneo moderates a discussion about adapting Shakespeare's sonnets to the stage, with playwrights Tony Kushner, John Guare, and Marsha Norman. (Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. 840-6800.) . . . ¶ June 15 at 8: New York University biology professor Richard Borowsky talks about the eyeless cave fish of Thailand, which he studied in situ earlier this year. (The Explorers Club, 46 E. 70th St. Tickets at the door.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Head Shots

BASEBALL has its "Ball Four" and football its "Paper Lion," but where are the great soccer books? World Cup 1998, hosted by France, begins on June 10th, so now's the time to poke around the bookshelves, especially if you're an American whose skepticism toward a game worshipped by

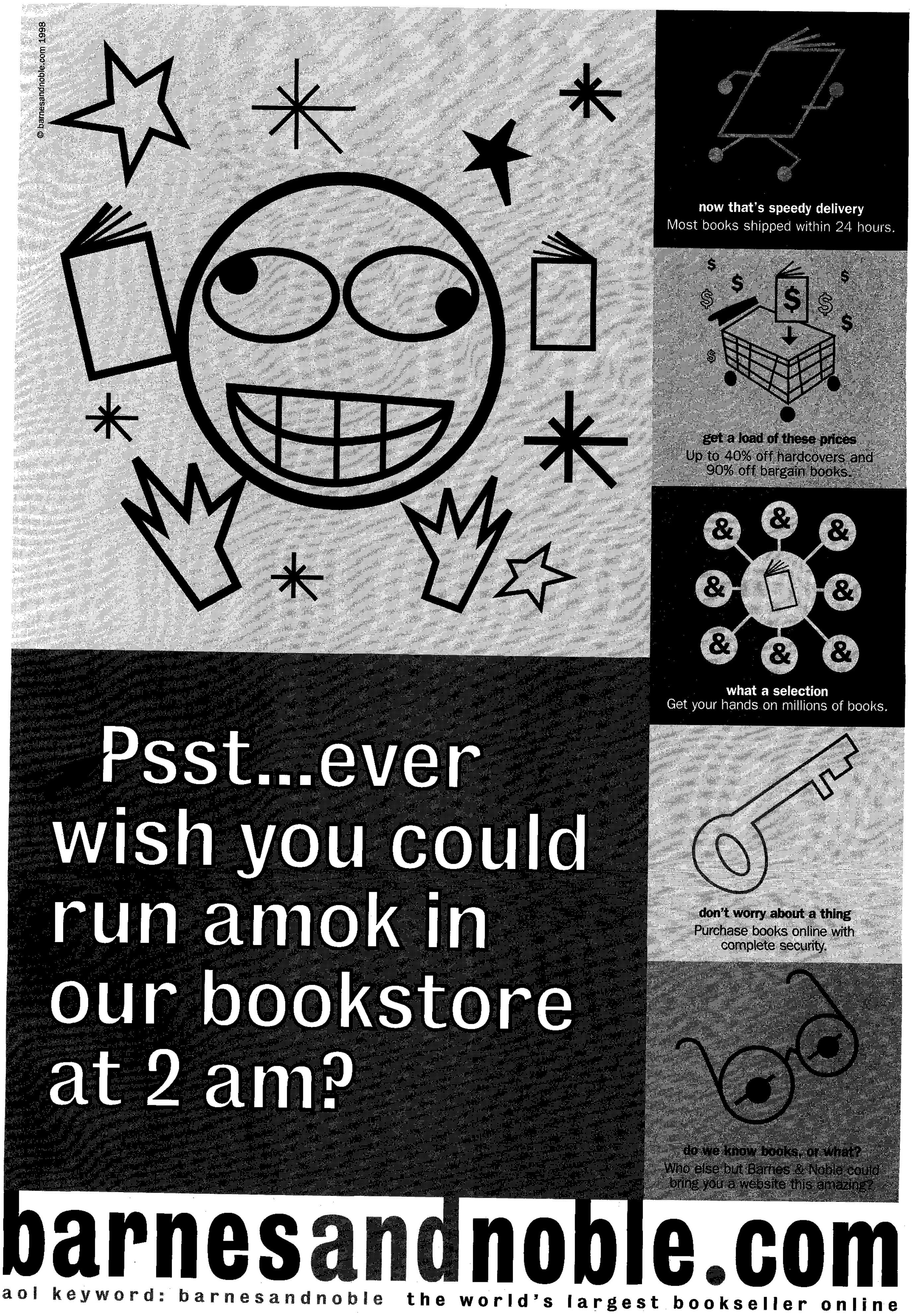


LAURENT CILLUFFO

the rest of the planet has not been dented by the emergence of soccer moms as an electoral bloc. In fact, America's resistance to the sport can be traced back to England—the nation that invented the modern version of the game—where Edward III, in 1349, pronounced soccer "stupid and utterly useless."

Most soccer books are how-to, including such titles as "Attacking," "Ball Control," and "Everything You Need to Know to Coach Soccer." It's no wonder, then, that a title like **Soccer in Sun and Shadow** (Verso) stands out like Pelé on a field of second-stringers. Written by the Uruguayan novelist Eduardo Galeano, the book is a daily missal of soccer, with meditations on such subjects as the origins of the ball, every World Cup tournament since the first one, in 1930, and the often elusive goal, which Galeano colorfully terms "soccer's orgasm."

Galeano's Latin brio is echoed by Andrés Cantor in **Goooal!** (Simon & Schuster), a breezy history of the World Cup. Cantor is the Univision sportscaster whose signature bray is mercifully abbreviated in the book's title; describing his trademark, Cantor writes, "I put my dreams, my childhood, my life into that scream." As it happens, dreams, childhood, and life are the true subjects of **Fever Pitch** (Riverhead), Nick Hornby's 1992 memoir of his obsession with the British club Arsenal. As pithy as Galeano is grand, Hornby gets to the bottom of his consuming, not entirely constructive passion. "For alarmingly large chunks of an average day," he confesses, "I am a moron." Similar judgments have hounded Diego Maradona, arguably the sport's greatest star, for years, but Jimmy Burns presents a more complex portrait of the trouble-prone Argentinean in his biography, **Hand of God** (Lyons). Even as a small child, Maradona could not resist the lure of the game: "That first football was the most beautiful present of my life," he says.



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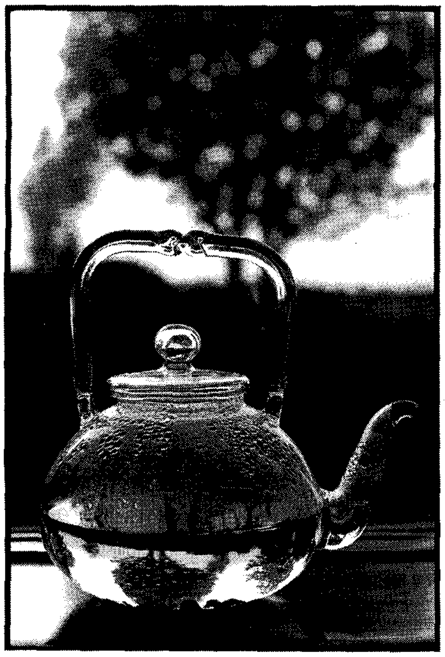

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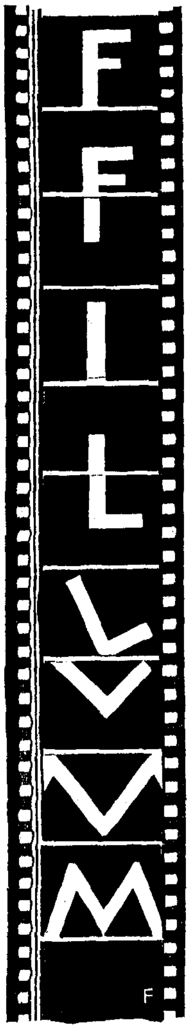
THE MOVIES

OPENINGS

Un Air de Famille (Family Resemblances)—Cedric Klapisch's comedy about a family reunion. In French. Opening June 12. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Can't Hardly Wait—The story of a high-school graduation party, written and directed by Harry Elfont and Deborah Kaplan. Opening June 12. (Criterion Center, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

Cousin Bette—Jessica Lange has the lead in this adaptation of Balzac's novel of France in the eighteen-forties. Directed by Des McAnuff. Opening June 12. (Angelika Film Center and Cinema II.)



Dirty Work—A comedy about two friends (Norm Macdonald and Artie Lange) who start an unusual business in which they take revenge on the enemies of their clients. Directed by Bob Saget. Opening June 12. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Waverly.)

The Farm: Angola, USA—Jonathan Stack and Liz Garbus's documentary about the Louisiana maximum-security prison. Opening June 10. (Film Forum.)

High Art—Lisa Cholodenko's drama follows the developing relationship between two women (Radha Mitchell and Ally Sheedy), set in the New York art world. Opening June 12. (Angelika Film Center.)

The Land Girls—The story of three young English girls (Catherine McCormack, Rachel Weisz, and Anna Friel) who, during the Second World War, became members of the Women's Land Army. Directed by David Leland. Opening June 12. (Paris.)

Little Boy Blue—Ryan Phillippe stars in the tale of a young man's struggles within his troubled family. Directed by Antonio Tibaldi. Opening June 12.

Passion in the Desert—An adventure tale involving a French soldier and a leopard in eighteenth-century Egypt. Directed by Lavinia Currier, based on a novella by Balzac. In French. Opening June 12. (Angelika Film Center and Eastside Playhouse.)

Six Days, Seven Nights—Two mismatched strangers (Harrison Ford and Anne Heche) are stranded on a desert island, in this adventure film directed by Ivan Reitman. Opening June 12. (East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

When I Close My Eyes—Writer-director Shunji Iwai's tale of a postal mixup and lost love. In Japanese. Opening June 12. (59th Street East Cinema.)

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

The Barkleys of Broadway (1949)—To borrow a phrase from Graham Greene, Fred Astaire never looked more like "a human Mickey Mouse" than he did in the glorious "Shoes with Wings On" number here—partly because it riffs on the source of one of Mickey's own greatest hits, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," with Astaire as a delighted, then delirious clerk in a store full of self-starting dancing shoes. The rest of the film is a satiric reunion of Astaire and Ginger Rogers as bickering musical-comedy stars. It has its moments (particularly the "Swing Trot" dance under the opening credits), but they're isolated. Oscar Levant lends the show a sardonic lift as their composer friend; he shambles through the action (in turn) like a lost Marx Brother and a twisted straight man. Charles Walters directed the Comden and Green script.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum 2; June 16-17.)

The Big Parade (1925)—King Vidor's First World War epic is justifiably famous for its big romantic flourish: the daring sequence of a French girl (Renée Adorée) searching for her doughboy lover (John Gilbert) among the thronged troops leaving her village for the front. After a swift, passionate embrace, she clings to the chain of his troop truck for a while, then won't stop chasing it until he tosses her some precious keepsakes, including a medallion and (improbably but wonderfully) a shoe. Harry Behn wrote the script, from a story by Laurence Stallings.—*M.S.* (Film Forum 2; June 15.)

Bulworth—Warren Beatty's fascinating high-wire act about a senator who thinks he can solve the country's ills by becoming a member of the hip-hop nation. It's an audience pleaser, at times funny and irreverent, but its condescending views on race relations and Beatty's civic-lesson street raps more often reduce the comedy to the level of polemic. Beatty's best work comes opposite the supporting actors; the performances of Halle Berry, Don Cheadle, and particularly Oliver Platt, as a harried spin-control operative, manage to lift the film above its failed-liberalism treatise. But even though the movie is fun to watch, crass and energetic when it needs to be, it's ultimately as phony as an old Frank Capra picture.—*Bruce Diones* (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea West, Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

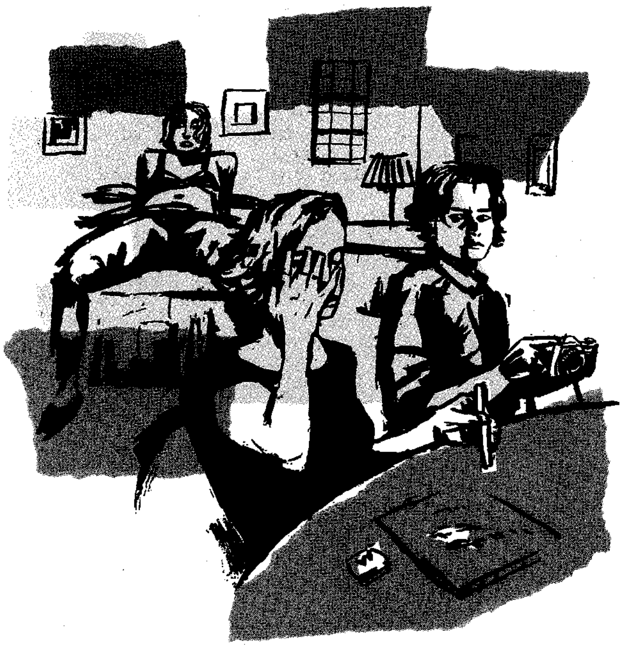
Clockwatchers—A sly fable about women and the workplace, directed and co-written by Jill Sprecher (with her sister, Karen Sprecher). Iris (Toni Collette), the newest temp at Global Credit, hides invoice forms in her bag after she makes mistakes on them. She is befriended by three other temps: Margaret (Parker Posey), the wild card of the group; Paula (Lisa Kudrow), a pretty would-be actress; and Jane (Alanna Ubach), an obsessive-compulsive who sports a diamond engagement ring. They all bond over trying on lipstick, but after things start disappearing from people's offices their friendship unravels. In its anti-ideological way, the movie is a smart feminist comment on how difficult it remains for young women to find their own identities in the corporate world.—*Daphne Merkin.* (5/25/98) (Angelika Film Center.)

Deep Impact—You may feel safe in your bed, but beware: even as you sleep, Earth is under threat from a vast, overheated surplus of character actors. How can they all fit into one silly movie? Could anyone really have Vanessa Redgrave and Maximilian Schell for her parents and still turn out, you know, O.K.? What is Robert Duvall doing in space? And, finally, just how deeply do you want Morgan Freeman to be President? All these questions are answered by Mimi Leder's clumpy apocalypse flick, in which our planet is approached by an enormous flame-grilled asteroid with extra cheese. Téa Leoni, playing a TV reporter, tries heroically to make light of the menace, but the tearful script finally wears her down.—*Anthony Lane* (5/18/98) (84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Waverly.)

The Disenchanted—Judith Godrèche stars in Benoît Jacquot's 1990 study of a seventeen-year-old struggling to become an independent adult. It doesn't help that her boyfriend is abusive and her invalid mother pressures her to sleep with a predatory older man who pays the bills. Jacquot is walking a fine line here. He's fascinated by Godrèche's coltish glow, and he keeps his camera on her face with a persistence that borders on voyeurism. But the cold, cinéma-vérité approach can't hide an urgent tenderness for his heroine. She's a victim, in danger of never trusting again. She's also a fighter, learning how to survive. In French.—*Sarah Kerr* (Film Forum.)

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas—Could there be a harder book to adapt to the screen than this acid-spiked romp through dystopian, Nixonian America? Nearly three decades later, Hunter S. Thompson's contempt for the American Dream doesn't have much punch; what stands out as truly bizarre is the quantity of drugs Thompson consumed on his trip. Director Terry Gilliam is a visual genius, and he and his brilliant art-design/special-effects team do a better job than you'd have thought possible of translating the paranoid energy of Thompson's prose and Ralph Steadman's trippy original drawings to the screen. But Gilliam seems less certain of the story's human content. Johnny Depp's Thompson comes across as a cipher, speaking in a gruff mumble that's hard to hear, and projecting an ethereal aura, as if this were the sequel to "Edward Scissorhands." Benicio del Toro, jeopardizing his hunk status with a significant weight gain, is far more daring as Thompson's paunchy, drug-loving Samoan companion.—*S.K.* (Art Greenwich Twin, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and 34th Street Showplace.)

42nd Street (1933)—This big, cheerful Warners musical was based on a novel by Bradford Ropes but was also an unofficial remake of the 1929 "On with the Show"; it gave new life to the clichés that have kept parodists happy—what's surprising is how organic the clichés once were. The backstage story is pleasantly tawdry and corny. Warner Baxter is the great Broadway producer-director (with heart trouble) who makes the memorable (and much lampooned) speech: "Miss Sawyer, you listen to me . . . and you listen hard. Two hundred people, two hundred jobs, $200,000, five weeks of grind and blood and sweat depend upon you! It's the lives of all these people who've worked with you. You've got to go on and you've got to give, and give and give! They've got to like you, got to. You understand? You can't fall down, you can't. Because your future's in it, my future and everything all of us have is staked on you. All right now, I'm through. But you keep your feet on the ground and your head on those shoulders of yours, and, Sawyer, you're going out a youngster, but you've got to come back a star!" Peggy Sawyer, the understudy who has to go on for the star, is Ruby Keeler, who wears little puffed sleeves (for innocence) even in her rehearsal clothes; training her for the opening, the tough Baxter never tells her to stop looking at her feet—and neither, apparently, did the film's choreographer, Busby Berkeley. It's hard to decide which is klunkier—her dancing or her line readings—but it's just about impossible not to like her. Bebe Daniels is the fading star (in fox furs) who breaks her ankle; George Brent is her lover; Dick Powell is the singing and smiling twerpy juvenile; Ginger Rogers is the gold-digging chorine known as the "countess"; Guy Kibbee is a sugar daddy; Una Merkel and Toby Wing are in the chorus. The songs by Harry Warren and Al Dubin include "Shuffle Off to Buffalo," "You're Getting to Be a Habit with Me," "Young and Healthy," and, of course, "42nd Street." Lloyd Bacon directed; the screenplay is by Rian James and James Seymour; cinematography by Sol Polito.—*Pauline Kael* (Bryant Park; June 15.)



Opening June 12, Patricia Clarkson, Radha Mitchell, and Ally Sheedy in Lisa Cholodenko's "High Art."

WHITING TENNIS

Godzilla—The star of those tacky old Japanese horror films now gets a tacky new Hollywood horror film all to himself. Brought into being by irresponsible nuclear tests in French Polynesia, Godzilla heads for New York in search of a really first-rate fish restaurant. In his haste and fury the monster destroys a large proportion of the city's leading tourist sites; having totalled the White House in his previous picture, "Independence Day," director Roland Emmerich can hardly contain his childish desire to blow stuff up. The movie is of minimum interest; the story of the movie, however—or, rather, of the way in which it has been engulfed by its own publicity—is bound to fascinate connoisseurs of cultural meltdown. (When Godzilla tramples on New York, he takes his cue from Columbia TriStar's marketing campaign.) All that stands in the monster's way is the combined bravado of Nick (Matthew Broderick), a research scientist, and Phillippe (Jean Reno), an entirely cool human being. Not even Roland Emmerich can keep the hangdog spirit of Reno on a leash. See the movie with a thousand friends, scream and shout, and then forget it.—*A.L.* (6/1/98) (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

Good News (1947)—One of the best of the lighthearted rah-rah collegiate musicals. The affable young Peter Lawford and goofy, blithe June Allyson are the leads and do the number "The French Lesson," by Comden and Green and Roger Edens, and Joan McCracken, with a gleeful look in her eyes, dances and sings the memorable novelty "Pass That Peace Pipe," by Edens and Ralph Blane and Hugh Martin. The rest of the score, including "The Varsity Drag," "Lucky in Love," and "The Best Things in Life Are Free," is from the original 1927 Broadway show by DeSylva, Brown, and Henderson (which was filmed once before, in 1930).—*P.K.* (Film Forum 2; June 16-17.)

Hope Floats—Poor Sandra Bullock: she keeps turning up in dull projects that have little going for them beyond her spunk. Here, she's an ex-beauty queen who learns on

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a confessional talk show that her husband is cheating on her. She goes home to Texas to be healed by her cloyingly eccentric mother (Gena Rowlands), who likes to stuff dead animals and dress them up like people. Harry Connick, Jr., plays the love interest, and he's slightly more dynamic than a tree. Forest Whitaker directed with a slow, sugary touch—and, one suspects, an eye toward the home-video market.—*S.K.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Waverly.)

The Horse Whisperer—A girl called Grace (Scarlett Johansson) is involved in an accident with her horse, Pilgrim. Both are grievously injured: Grace loses a leg and Pilgrim loses his cool. They are then transported to Montana by Grace's determined mother (Kristin Scott Thomas), to seek out a man named Tom Booker (Robert Redford). "I help horses with people problems," Tom says, although he proves to be equally skilled at rejuvenating married women. The movie was directed by Redford himself, and the script is by Eric Roth and Richard LaGravenese: the latter made "The Bridges of Madison County" fit for human consumption, and he and Roth have almost pulled off the same trick with Nicholas Evans's nonsensical novel. The sticking point of the movie is its exorbitant length: two and three-quarter hours does seem like an awful long time to patch up a horse, and a movie that goes straight for your heart should not be allowed to fester. Some viewers may be bemused by the Scott Thomas character, an Englishwoman who cuts a swath through the world of New York magazine publishing. What kind of crazy fantasist dreamed *that* one up?—*A.L.* (Guild, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII. . . . ¶ Cinema II; through June 11.)

The Last Days of Disco—Whit Stillman's story about a group of friends who frequent the clubs in the early eighties. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 19th Street East 6.)

The Opposite of Sex—Christina Ricci vamps it up in Don Roos's sweet caper about a manipulative teen-ager who goes to live with her gay half brother (Martin Donovan) and ends up putting the moves on his dumb but gorgeous boyfriend (Ivan Sergei); a subplot concerns the brother's former lover, who died of AIDS and left behind a bitter sister (Lisa Kudrow) who stands in the way of Ricci's schemes. Roos's witty script starts out cynical but ends up a little on the didactic side, lecturing about how we shouldn't underestimate the importance of sex in love, but on the other hand love should be about more than sex, etc. The result is likable enough, though the deadpan indie atmosphere and the TV-quality visuals keep it from rising to real screwball heights.—*S.K.* (Angelika Film Center and Regency. . . . ¶ Eastside Playhouse; through June 11.)

The Truman Show—Jim Carrey stars in Peter Weir's drama about a man who discovers that his entire life is a twenty-four-hour-a-day documentary television show. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

ALSO PLAYING

ARTEMISIA (reviewed in our issue of 5/25/98): Cinema 3rd Avenue and The Screening Room. . . . **BEYOND SILENCE:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **BROADWAY DAMAGE:** Quad Cinema. . . . **THE BUTCHER BOY** (4/6/98): Village East Cinemas. . . . **CHARLIE HOBOKEN:** Village East Cinemas. . . . **CHINESE BOX** (4/20/98): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **DAY AT THE BEACH:** Village East Cinemas. . . . **DÉJÀ VU:** Quad Cinema. . . . **GOOD WILL HUNTING** (1/19/98): 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **THE HANGING GARDEN:** Sutton and Village East Cinemas. . . . **HE GOT GAME:** Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **INSOMNIA:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **KURT AND COURTNEY:** Cinema Village. . . . **LOVE AND DEATH ON LONG ISLAND** (3/9/98): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **MARIUS AND JEANNETTE:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **MERCURY RISING:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **MR. JEALOUSY:** Angelika Film Center and First & 62nd Cinemas. . . . **THE OBJECT OF MY AFFECTION:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **A PERFECT MURDER:** Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, State, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **PRIMARY COLORS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **SLIDING DOORS:** Chelsea Cinemas, Embassy 2, Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE SPANISH PRISONER** (4/13/98): Angelika Film Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **TITANIC** (12/15/97): Embassy 3, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square. . . . **UNDER THE SKIN** (5/25/98): Village East Cinemas. . . . **U.S. MARSHALS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE WEDDING SINGER:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **WILDE:** Paris and Quad Cinema. . . . **WILD MAN BLUES:** The Screening Room.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, 2, and 3, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

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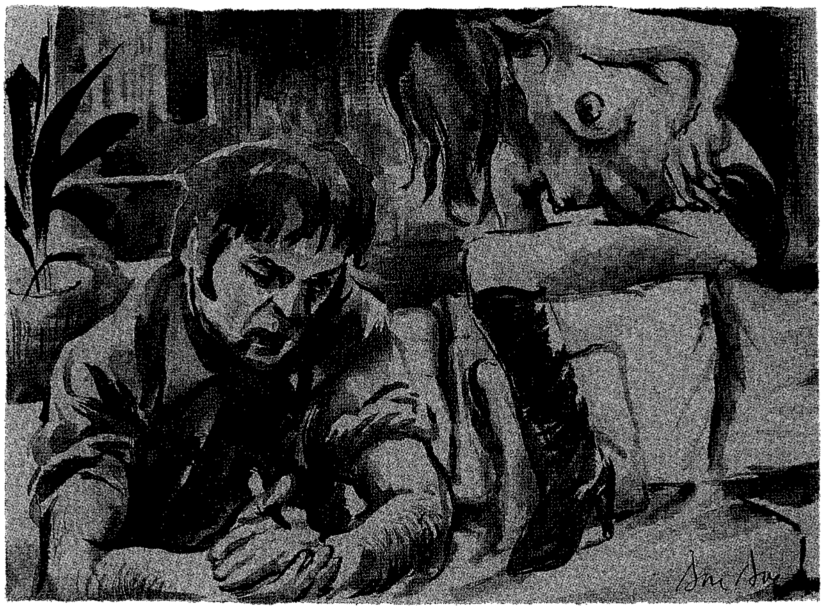
REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—June 10-11: "Next Stop, Greenwich Village" (1976, Paul Mazursky), with Lenny Baker, Shelley Winters, and Ellen Greene, and "A Fine Madness" (1966, Irvin Kershner), with Sean Connery, Jean Seberg, Joanne Woodward, and Patrick O'Neal. . . . ¶ A program of films featuring the work of Betty Comden and Adolph Green. June 12-14: "Bells Are Ringing" (1960, Vincente Minnelli), with Judy Holliday and Dean Martin, and "It's Always Fair Weather" (1955, Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen), with Kelly, Dan Dailey, and Michael Kidd. . . . June 15: "The Big Parade" (†). . . . June 16-17: "The Barkleys of Broadway" (†) and "Good News" (†).



At MOMA, Rip Torn in Milton Moses Ginsberg's "Coming Apart."

DON DOE

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A series of films made between 1966 and 1969. June 11 at 2:30 and June 12 at 6: "The Joke" (1969, Jaromil Jireš; in Czech). . . . June 11 at 3 and June 13 at 5: "David Holzman's Diary" (1967, Jim McBride). . . . June 11 at 6: "Blow-Up" (1966, Michelangelo Antonioni). . . . June 12 at 2:30: "Faces" (1968, John Cassavetes). . . . June 12 at 3 and June 16 at 6: "Death by Hanging" (1968, Nagisa Oshima; in Japanese). . . . June 12 at 8: "The Russians Are Coming, the Russians Are Coming" (1966, Norman Jewison). . . . June 13 at 2: "Shame" (1968, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). . . . June 13 at 2:30: "Warrendale" (1967, Allan King). . . . June 13 at 5: "Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach" (1968, Jean-Marie Straub; in German). . . . June 14 at 2 and June 15 at 6: "Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice" (1969, Paul Mazursky). . . . June 14 at 2:30: "Good Times, Wonderful Times" (1965, Lionel Rogosin) and "The War Games" (1966, Peter Watkins). . . . June 14 at 5: "Closely Watched Trains" (1966, Jiří Menzel; in Czech). . . . June 14 at 5: "Ulysses" (1967, Joseph Strick). . . . June 15 at 2:30: "The Money Order" (1968, Ousmane Sembène; in Wolof). . . . June 15 at 6: "Camille 2000" (1969, Radley Metzger). . . . June 16 at 2:30: "Andrei Roublev" (1969, Andrei Tarkovsky; in Russian). . . . June 16 at 6: "Coming Apart" (1969, Milton Moses Ginsberg).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A series of films directed by Shohei Imamura; all in Japanese, with English subtitles. June 10 at 2 and 7 and June 11 at 4:15 and 9: "The Ballad of Narayama" (1983). . . . June 10 at 4:30 and 9:30 and June 11 at 2: "Zegen" (1987). . . . ¶ June 11 at 6:30: "The Life and Times of Life and Times" (1998, Peter Freidman and Jean-François Brunet). . . . ¶ From June 12: The 1998 Human Rights Watch International Film Festival.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of independent films made in New York City. June 13 at 2: "Liquid Sky" (1982, Slava Tsukerman). . . . June 13 at 4:30: "Nadja" (1994, Michael Almereyda). . . . June 14 at 2: "Amateur" (1995, Hal Hartley). . . . June 14 at 4:30: "Metropolitan" (1990, Whit Stillman).

Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.—Mondays, starting at dusk: free drive-in-style moviegoing, beginning with coming attractions. The feature on June 15 will be "42nd Street" (†). (Rain date is the following night.)

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—June 16 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Normal People Are Nothing Special" (1994, Laurence Ferreira-Barbosa; in French).

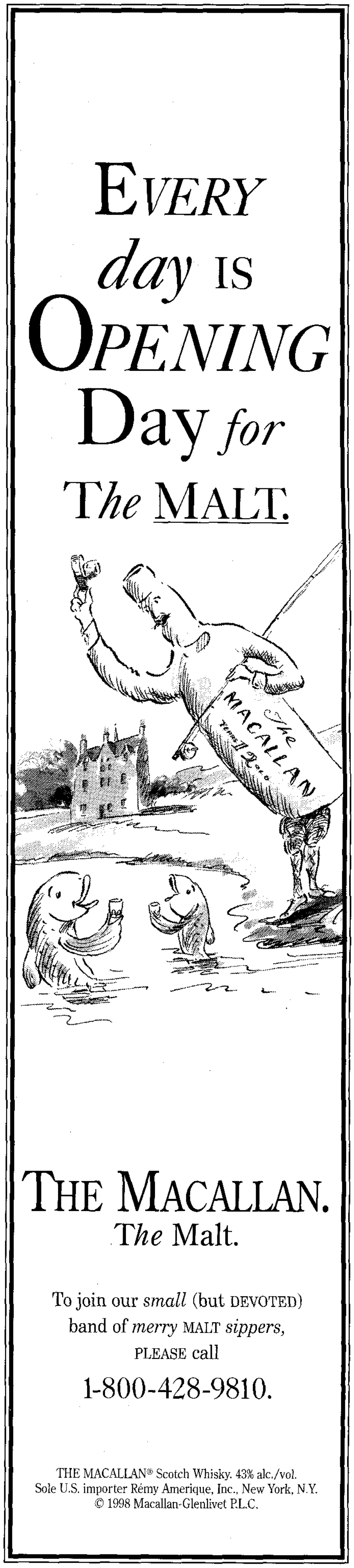
A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). June 14 at 7, the feature will be "Goin' to Town" (1935, Alexander Hall).

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through June 30: "The Boy in the Plastic Bubble" (1976, Randal Kleiser), with John Travolta. (Showings Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 2 and 4; Thursdays and Fridays at 2, 4, and 6.)

The 10th Anniversary New York Lesbian and Gay Film Festival—Through June 14: Full-length features and documentaries and short films are being shown at the Public Theatre in the Newman Theatre (425 Lafayette Ave.) and at the New School in the Tishman Auditorium (66 W. 12th St.). (For information about schedules and films, call 260-2400.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000, ext. 230)—A program of Mexican films on which Gabriel Figueroa served as cinematographer. All films in Spanish, with English subtitles. June 13 at 5: "Over on the Big Ranch" (1933, Fernando de Fuentes).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—June 10-11 at 7 and 9, June 12 at 10, June 13 at 6 and 10, and June 14 at 10: "The Unveiling" (1996, Rodney Evans). . . . June 12-13 at 8: "A Man Whose Life Was Full of Woe Has Been Surprised by Joy" (1997, Bruce Elder). . . . June 14 at 6 and June 16 at 7: "Film Novel—Three Sisters" (1977, Istvan Darday and Gyorgyi Szalai; in Hungarian).



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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

THE BENCH

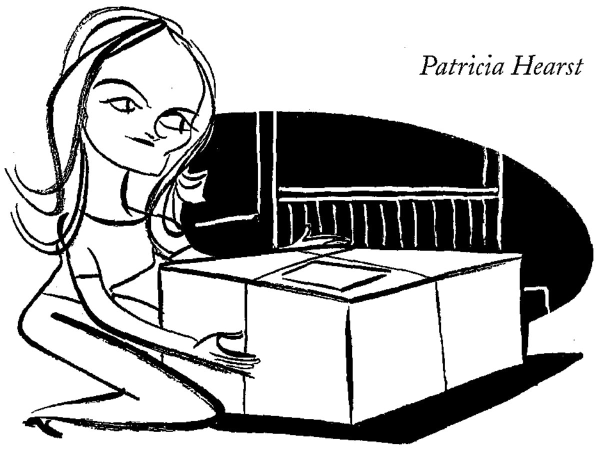
A strange parcel brings déjà vu to Patricia Hearst's door.

In John Waters's 1994 film, "Serial Mom," Patricia Hearst plays a suburban matron who is murdered for committing the unpardonable crime of wearing white shoes after Labor Day. These days, Hearst—the newspaper heiress who was kidnapped in 1974 by the radical Symbionese Liberation Army, and who then served two years in prison for taking part with her captors in a bank robbery—*is* a suburban matron. In the fifteen years that she has lived with her husband, Bernard Shaw, and two young daughters in a leafy Connecticut neighborhood, she has not viewed her surroundings as the insidiously menacing hell that Waters likes to satirize on film. A few months ago, however, all that changed: Hearst found herself the target of a complicated narcotics investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration.

One morning in February, a U.P.S. deliveryman rang the doorbell of Hearst's home. "I leaned out the window and told him to leave the package," Hearst said the other day. "He goes, 'No. You have to sign for it.'" Annoyed, Hearst plodded downstairs; she had been unpacking from a trip to Alaska for a celebrity save-the-whales event. "So I get downstairs, and there's this enormous box," she continued. The box, which was addressed to Mr. Pat Shaw, bore a San Diego post-office box as a return address. There were two telephone numbers on the box, and Hearst, not recognizing them, became suspicious: "I said, 'You know, there's been a mistake here. This box isn't for me. You'd better take it back.'"

The U.P.S. man became argumentative. "He got agitated, and was insisting I take it," Hearst said. When she finally signed and turned to go back into the house, the deliveryman asked her, "Aren't you going to take it inside?" She left the box on the porch. After the man drove off, Hearst said, she tried the numbers on the box. One was an out-of-order pay phone; the second was a pay phone, too. "I always look my mail over because of having spent eighteen months with terrorists who thought up things like this," she said. "They would sit around and dream up ways to kill people." Worried that she might have a bomb on her doorstep, Hearst called the police. (She later learned from neighbors that the police had sealed off the whole neighborhood.)

Within minutes, Hearst said, a truck pulled up. "I assumed it was the bomb squad," she went on. A man and a woman, both in plainclothes, came to the door and flashed badges identifying themselves as federal Drug Enforcement agents. "He said, 'Someone has sent you narcotics. And a lot of them,'" Hearst recalled. "Then the woman whipped out her handcuffs and she said, 'Yeah! I was here to put these on you!'"



Patricia Hearst

The first thing they asked her, Hearst said, was "Is anything happening in your life that might have triggered this?"

There was, she told them. Two weeks earlier, her application for a Presidential pardon had come up for consideration at the Justice Department. Although President Jimmy Carter commuted her seven-year prison sentence in 1979, Hearst is still a convicted felon, and she is seeking to clear her name on the ground that her participation in the S.L.A.'s crimes was coerced. Could someone be trying to frame her in order to derail the pardon, she wondered?

The two agents told Hearst that by calling the police and not taking the box into her home she had done "everything right." After questioning her for about an hour, they left. A few days later, however, one of the agents called again and was referred to the Shaws' lawyer, George Martinez. The agent told Martinez that the D.E.A. had been tipped off that the box contained drugs, and had detained it for almost a day before delivery. He pointed out that because the box did not arrive on the expected delivery date the innocent-seeming conduct of the Shaws might be less than totally conclusive. In other words, Hearst and her husband were still under suspicion. When the D.E.A. interrogated Shaw, the agent asked him questions about whether he and his wife ever used illegal drugs, about the personal lives of family members, and about whether his wife kept a diary, among other things. The Shaws also learned that the D.E.A. had been questioning their friends and relatives.

The Shaws have hired their own investigator, Robert Silbering, who is a former New York City Special Narcotics Prosecutor. Despite many years of working closely with the D.E.A., Silbering has come up dry. "I am disappointed that the

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

D.E.A. has not shared the information that it has," he says. "Certainly, based on Patty's background, there's concern for the family's safety." Silbering is convinced that the U.P.S. driver was a D.E.A. agent making what is known as a "controlled delivery." (The D.E.A., the Justice Department, and the local Connecticut police precinct would not comment on the case.)

In April, Martinez sent a five-page letter to Attorney General Janet Reno, complaining that the D.E.A. had launched "a campaign of harassment" against his client and faulting the agency for not "concentrating its efforts to determine who may have committed this crime against her and her family." The letter ends on a conspiratorial note: "Has the DEA or the DOJ been involved in devising or manufacturing evidence to inculpate Ms. Hearst and Mr. Shaw?" Several weeks ago, Martinez received a reply from the Department of Justice promising a "detailed and expeditious" response.

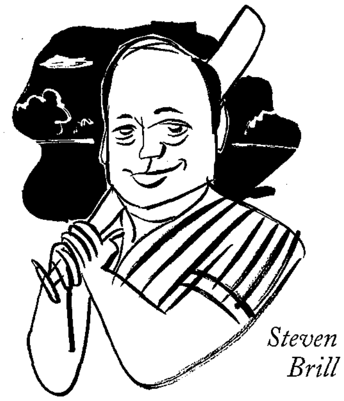
Patricia Shaw says she feels like Patty Hearst again. She's been having vivid, debilitating flashbacks from her kidnapping. "I stay in my room all day," she said. "People tell me to snap out of it. I can't snap out of it. I'm thrown back into it." —ANTHONY HADEN-GUEST

INK

Steven Brill practices crying "Foul!" on his own field of dreams.

STEVEN BRILL, the combative creator of the media-watchdog magazine *Brill's Content,* which makes its début next week, has long been critical of journalists who lob softball questions in interviews. But journalists who lob actual softballs—well, they are much more agreeable. Brill, who launched *The American Lawyer* and Court TV before appointing himself press scourge, has built a baseball diamond at his home in Bedford, and at the Sunday-morning games he holds there the Fourth Estate is amply represented. Paula Zahn, of CBS News, is a regular, as is Dan Abrams, the NBC News correspondent. Walter Isaacson, the managing editor of *Time,* has played, and though Catherine Crier, from Fox News, doesn't play she sometimes shows up to support her husband, Christopher Wilson, who owns a gallery. Michael Kramer, the editorial director of *Brill's Content,* is a faithful participant, too.

When Brill was asked whether he would refrain in his magazine from playing hardball with certain media machers because he had invited them to run around his back yard in shorts, he chuckled. "You'll see! You'll see!" he said. "That is a question you will laugh about when you see the first issue." What? "PAULA ZAHN—EXPOSED" on the cover? "I don't think there's anything about Paula in the issue," he said. "But of course it's not going to make any difference."



Steven Brill

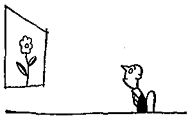
Brill insists that his game is a low-key, guys-in-the-neighborhood kind of affair. "Don't confuse it with the Sag Harbor game," he said, referring to the long-running journalist-heavy event in which the likes of John Leo, Mort Zuckerman, and Robert Sam Anson round the bases. Brill has thought about challenging the Sag Harbor team to a game, but, he says, "they wouldn't come, because two-thirds of the people they'd be playing are people they haven't heard of, so it wouldn't be worth it to them." Still, Brill's game has included players with more than minor-league name recognition: David Boies, the former Cravath lawyer who is arguing the government's case against Microsoft; Daniel Biederman, the president of the Grand Central Partnership; the novelist Anne Faulk; the former Holt editor Allen Peacock; Andrew Tisch, the C.E.O. of Lorillard; and the screenwriter Anne-Marie Martin. (Martin's husband, Michael Crichton, stays away.) "It's a very good-spirited game," Floyd Abrams, the First Amendment lawyer and a renowned pitcher, said after the second game of the season. "It's people who are used to winning, or who think they are."

Just as Brill has come up with a code of conduct for the press—he published it in *The American Lawyer* in 1994—he has also formulated his own house softball rules. "He does believe in simple rules, and it is very democratic," said Stan Pottinger, the novelist and former Justice Department official, who heads one of the teams. (Brill, naturally, captains the other.) "I won't say it doesn't matter to him who wins, because winning is everything. But there are no strikeouts—you get to swing until you hit the ball." As a Brill-approved press would be, the players are self-regulating: there are no umpires. "We just scream at each other," Pottinger said.

Brill has a reputation as a seriously competitive player. "Last week, he boffed a homer with the bases loaded," Floyd Abrams said, admiringly. But Brill's pals observe that he is not without a sense of humor about his driven nature. "Last year, Floyd was pitching," Pottinger recalled, "and somebody very big and strong at the plate hit a line drive, and it hit Floyd in the leg and dropped him to the field. It was a really serious hit, and he had this enormous welt and broken blood vessels. Everyone came running in to the field to see if he was O.K. Steve ran over and looked down, and said, 'Nice stop, Floyd.' " —REBECCA MEAD

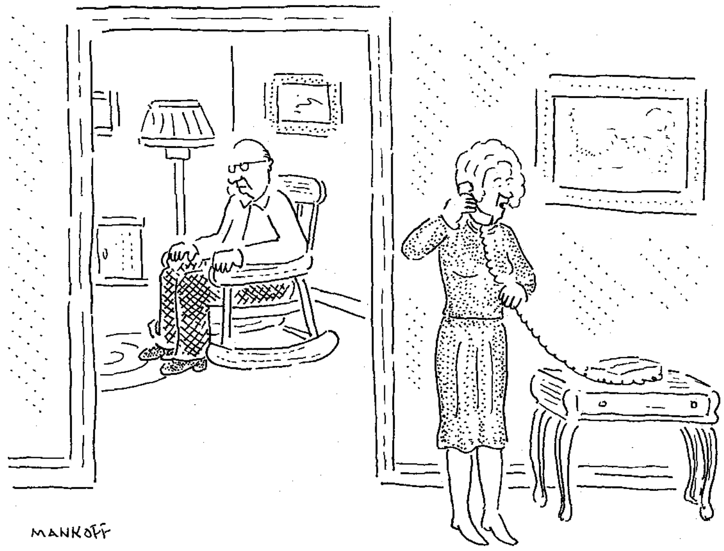
AT THE MUSEUMS

Thelma Golden gets set to rattle the critics with a millennial Biennial.



MOST people who think they know what they want to be when they grow up have rather general ideas in mind—a doctor, perhaps, or a firefighter. Not Thelma Golden. She wanted to be a curator of art. Not just any art, but contemporary art. Not just anywhere, but at a museum on the Upper East Side of Manhattan that had a hefty supply of the stuff. Golden, a petite, energetic African-American woman of thirty-one, was hired at the Whitney Museum in 1988, a year after she graduated from Smith College. Most of her friends wondered why it took the Whitney that long.

Her focus and her determination will be useful as she takes on the thankless



"He's pretty depressed—Ginger Spice was his favorite."

task of serving as curator of the Whitney Biennial for the year 2000. The Biennial is the nation's most prestigious museum show of new work, and complaints about who is included and who is left out are one of the art world's most reliable rituals of gossip.

Golden is undeterred. She combines the enthusiasm of a cheerleader with the cerebral insights of a scholar. (She is a visiting critic in art at Yale.) In her tight black suit and yellow top, she could pass for an M.B.A. whose taste in fashion is just a bit edgier than that of the rest of the Citibank crowd, but her most famous accomplishment at the Whitney so far is a 1994 show called "Black Male: Representations of Masculinity in Contemporary American Art," which caused the museum's critics to make even more than their usual flutter of disapproval. If Golden had her way, she would work at the Whitney in the morning, run to fashion shows in the afternoon, and spend every night as a guest on the Charlie Rose show.

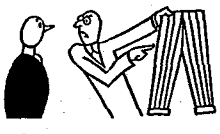
Golden comes from a middle-class family in Queens, and got excited by contemporary art, she says, reading critics such as the *Times'* Michael Brenson when she was in high school. As a teenager, she made daily visits to SoHo and to the museums, and she dates Biennials past by how they connected to her school career. "Nineteen eighty-three was my high-school-graduation year, and '85 was the year I came home on spring break and ran to the Biennial, then wanted to write about Barbara Krueger, which didn't go down too well with Smith. And '87 was the year I graduated, and the first time I had enough money to buy the catalogue."

Golden has been calling her Biennial "B2K"—a homemade acronym for "Biennial Two Thousand"—and she makes much of the fact that it will come at the millennium. "This Biennial provides a chance to reshuffle the deck," she says, "to look widely and see if there is truly an interesting national exhibition that can be done.

"I saw this chart in my doctor's office the other day," Golden says. "It showed all the different kinds of eaters, from vegans, who eat only a few plants that grow aboveground, to omnivores. It occurred to me that art curators are like that, too—there are vegans, who are two- or three-artist curators, and there are omnivores. I would like to be more of an omnivore." —PAUL GOLDBERGER

RAG TRADE

Helmut Lang's new jeans make your résumé more interesting.



THERE used to be only one way to buy jeans: dark blue and stiff. If you didn't wash them a couple of times before you wore them, it was hard to walk. They even hurt. Eventually, someone figured out that pre-washing them was a good marketing move. Then came stonewashing, which made brand-new jeans look as if a cowboy had been living in them, and acid-washing, which gave the jeans-wearer the look of an industrial-accident survivor. This concept of breaking in clothing before it is worn isn't entirely new. The Duke of Bedford's "Book of Snobs" advised gentlemen who were sticklers for the lived-in look to have their valets wear their bespoke Savile Row suits until they acquired a certain softness. The most recent example of the been-there, done-that look for garments is the work of the designer Helmut Lang. He has introduced painter's jeans.

Not to be confused with house-painter's pants—those baggy coverall things with the big pockets—Lang's paint-splattered jeans look just like the jeans worn by artists such as Brice Marden and Ross Bleckner and April Gornik. The look is polychromatic and quite authentic. At two hundred and seventy dollars a pair, they are expensive, but think of what you're saving on studio space. And you don't even have to mess up your floor.

Richard Prince, a painter who has been spotted in chic restaurants wearing paint-splattered jeans, is a longtime fan of the look. "I start out the year wearing black Levi's and by the end of the year they're white Levi's," he told me. "I never wash them. The paint on them is like a detergent. Also, I never wear underwear when I paint."

The only authenticity problem with these Helmut Lang jeans is that most painters you might spot at Barocco or Odeon are probably wearing similarly splattered shoes. There's a great opportunity here for Prada, Robert Clergerie, or some other hip shoemaker to cash in on the working-artist look before it's out. They'd better act fast, though, because the Helmut Lang boutique in SoHo sold virtually all its paint-splashed jeans before they even hit the store. (That makes sense: they're the perfect thing for wearing in a loft once inhabited by an artist.) The designer isn't making any more, so these Helmut Lang originals are bound to appreciate in value. They could be on the block at Christie's before you know it.

—GLENN O'BRIEN

MEDICAL DISPATCH

SUPERASPIRIN

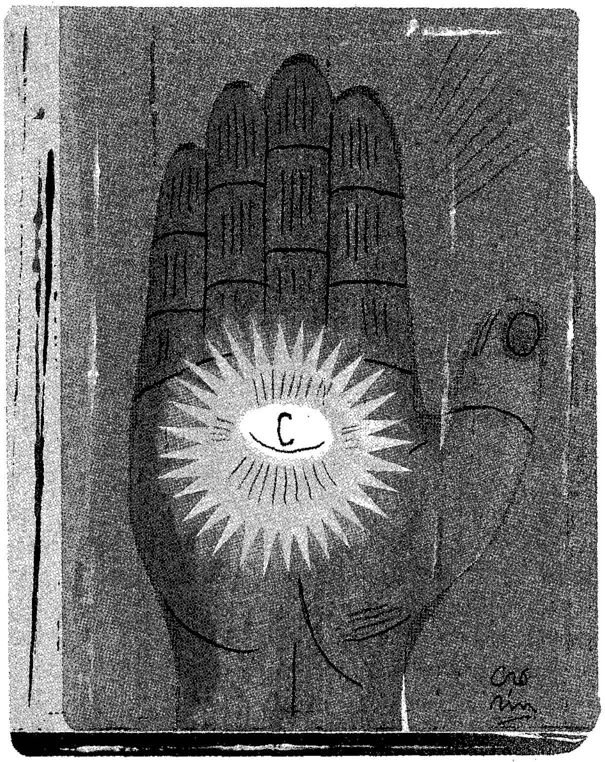
A new kind of drug could make Motrin and Aleve obsolete. It treats arthritis like nothing else. Can it treat cancer and Alzheimer's, too?

BY JEROME GROOPMAN

In the autumn of 1979, I began to train for the Boston Marathon. Each day I ran from my laboratory, at the Harvard Medical School, along the Charles River and back—some fifteen miles. To increase my stamina, I began to row on a stationary machine. I soon developed a stabbing pain in my lower back. A sports orthopedist I consulted told me that I had early arthritis of the lumbar spine, probably from years of running on city pavement, and that some of the disks there were bulging from the strain of rowing.

I was told to stop all exercise, lie in bed, and begin taking high doses of aspirin. It was a wonderfully low-tech approach, and, as a physician, I appreciated its good sense. Sir John Vane, a pharmacologist in Britain, had recently elucidated how aspirin works. (He later received the Nobel Prize for it.) Trauma generates the release of substances called prostaglandins, which are responsible for the cardinal features of inflammation: pain, redness, heat, and swelling. Aspirin reduces the prostaglandins by blocking an enzyme that helps make them—an enzyme known as cycloöxygenase, or COX.

I soon learned that the reality wasn't as elegant as the theory. Aspirin and similar nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDs—their trade names include Motrin and Aleve—were disappointing in their benefits and significant in their side effects: my stomach burned, my ears buzzed, I became dizzy. In desperation, I underwent back surgery. When I woke up, my legs were frozen in pain. I had bled around the spinal nerves during the operation: NSAIDs prevent blood from clotting normally, by poisoning the platelets. I was then placed on Percocet, a narcotic, which made me dopey and nauseated. For three months, I lay in bed on a rubber pad filled with ice chips to numb my back. I ended up with worsened spinal arthritis, and, like the other forty million Americans who suffer from arthritis and similar maladies, I've had to make do with those NSAIDs, while pondering the inadequacies of the modern medicine cabinet.



More than ten thousand patients have been treated with Celebra, and no side effects have been detected.

People often think of inflammation as merely an annoying symptom. But inflammation doesn't just signal injury; it can—in a vicious cycle—perpetuate injury. That's why disorders like arthritis can be so crippling, chronic, and hard to treat. And that's why patients are willing to risk serious side effects for drugs that offer even a temporary respite.

Several biotech companies have plans to bring out a number of powerful drugs to treat the severest of the joint diseases, rheumatoid arthritis. So debilitating is this affliction that these treatments have been widely heralded despite their potential dangers. The drugs—including Enbrel and Avakine—may make you vulnerable to life-threatening infection and cancers such as lymphoma. In addition, the animal proteins on which some of these new treatments are based can trigger severe allergic reactions.

So the alternatives have remained grim: high-risk—and necessarily short-term—immunosuppressant therapies for people with the most disabling forms of inflammatory disease, and NSAIDs for the rest of us. But recently an industry scientist, Philip Needleman, has transformed the treatment of pain and inflammation by creating a compound that is potent in its effects yet appears to be far safer than any other known anti-inflammatory. More than ten thousand people have been tested, and none have experienced any side effects. Not only does the drug represent a quantum leap forward in the therapy of arthritis but, if some promising research is borne out, it may even play a role in preventing or treating a host of other conditions, from cancer to Alzheimer's disease.

"So I'm cranking along, you know, studying inflammation in rabbits," Needleman told me, in an exuberant Brooklyn accent. "And this rabbit's kidney was exploding with prostaglandins. Where, I asked myself, was this explosion coming from?" Needleman is over six feet tall and, with his broad shoulders and fleshy face, resembles an aging linebacker. He cheerfully credits the discovery of his billion-dollar molecule to that rabbit's kidney he was studying years ago when he was the chairman of the pharmacology department at Washington University, in St. Louis. A series of experiments involving the kidney tissue pointed to agitated white blood cells, which were recognized sources of inflammatory substances. "But then we did the T-shirt experiment!"

Needleman is one of the most eminent researchers in the study of inflammation—a member of the National Academy of Sciences and, since 1991, the chief scientist at the Monsanto

BRIAN CRONIN

Company. His lab is stocked with high-speed centrifuges, protein sequencers, and gamma counters. But a T-shirt experiment?

"You know—like, you're with your kid, and you get a stencilled T-shirt, so you wear it across your chest," he explained. "It's someone or something that you believe in, that you're willing to do anything and everything in the world to see through, to the very end. And you want to wear it on your chest—like 'Save the Whales'—to announce to the world how committed you are."

Needleman had bathed tissue from the inflamed rabbit kidney in a chemical that eliminated the source of ordinary prostaglandin manufacture. And yet prostaglandins were still being pumped out. What if inflamed cells had a way of manufacturing prostaglandins that was completely different from the way healthy cells did so? At this point it was merely a conjecture, but Needleman felt so confident of it that he was ready to wear it on his chest.

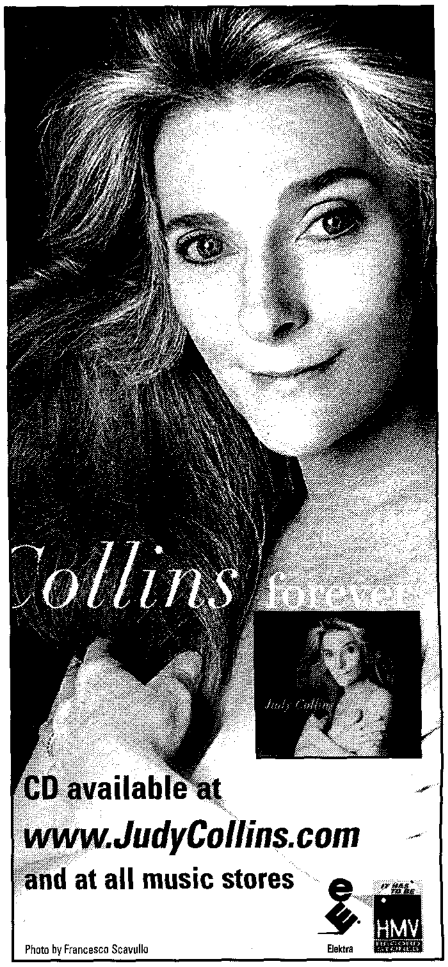
And the more research he did the more certain he became that there were two kinds of COX enzyme. One enzyme would provide the "housekeeper" prostaglandins—the regular, modest levels that kept our stomach, platelets, kidneys, and other tissues in working order. The second enzyme was produced only in the event of inflammation or trauma, and generated the high levels of prostaglandins that cause inflammation. If COX-1 was a garden sprinkler, COX-2 was a water cannon.

Late in 1990, at an international conference in Florence, Needleman gave an address predicting that two such forms of COX would be found, and that blocking COX-2 would selectively control inflammation without disturbing our physiology. Shortly afterward, other scientists confirmed his hypothesis and isolated the second enzyme. Now Needleman's efforts were directed at finding a drug that could discriminate between the two enzymes. "I mobilized all the medicinal chemists at Monsanto," he told me. "It was a once-in-a-lifetime chance." If his faith in his hypothesis was impressive, so was his ability to convince a chemical giant that it should enlist a large portion of its pharmaceutical resources to work on a single project. In fact, he was recently named co-president of G. D. Searle, Monsanto's pharmaceutical division.

Needleman and his expanded team attacked the problem on several fronts. By cloning the gene for COX-2, they prepared a large amount of the enzyme. Needleman had already gone on what he called a "seven-day sabbatical" to Sir John Vane's laboratory, in England, in order to learn all the Nobel laureate's techniques for assessing inflammation. Now he reviewed the known NSAIDs and determined which were least noxious to the stomach while still effective against inflammation. These, he reasoned, might have a much greater affinity for COX-2 than for COX-1, and their chemical structures might give a clue to why. Soon, the Monsanto group sculpted a chemical backbone that was refined into a compound, called celecoxib, that blocked COX-2 and spared COX-1. Studies of celecoxib progressed smoothly from the test tube to animals and then to man. In March, 1995, five years after Needleman floated his hypothesis in Florence, the first patient was treated with the new drug, which Monsanto has named Celebra.

FOR thousands of years before Needleman's breakthrough, the medical approach to inflammation essentially amounted to variations on a theme. The ancient Egyptians employed preparations of myrtle leaves to relieve joint and other pains. Hippocrates prescribed the sap of willow bark for similar complaints and for fever. The active substance in these botanical remedies was salicylic acid. In 1897, the Bayer Company, in Germany, synthesized a more effective preparation—acetylsalicylic acid, better known as aspirin. (Cortisone, introduced with high hopes shortly after the Second World War, could not be used for chronic therapy of arthritis, because it proved to have devastating side effects.) The newer NSAIDs developed in this century are chemically distinct from aspirin but work by the same mechanism that John Vane discovered: they, too, reduce prostaglandin production by inhibiting the COX enzymes.

NSAIDs, despite their many side effects and limited potency, are some of the most heavily used drugs in the world. Indeed, they're one of the pillars of the modern pharmaceutical industry, prescribed for everything from migraine headaches to tennis elbow. Last year, seventy-seven million prescriptions for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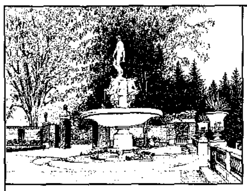
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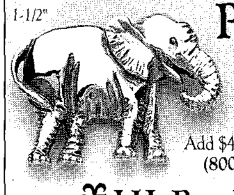
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NSAIDs were written in the United States, and an equal quantity of these drugs was probably bought over the counter. In this country alone, they account for sales of as much as eight billion dollars a year. The cost of their side effects is more difficult to calculate, but every year some eighty thousand Americans are hospitalized, and some eight thousand die, as a consequence of them. Of course, the vast majority of people who take these pills regularly for pain don't experience any dire medical emergencies. For many of them, including tens of millions of arthritics (whose numbers grow as the population ages), the NSAIDs present a choice between ulcers and aches. And, even at high doses, the relief afforded too often falls short of the relief required.

Rich Dillon is a fifty-three-year-old firefighter from Lincoln, Nebraska, who had long suffered from arthritis in his knees. Four years ago, the pain and swelling became so severe that he could not comfortably support the heavy bunker gear and the oxygen tank that he had to wear in order to enter a blaze and do his job. His leisure activities, too, were curtailed: more than an hour of driving caused his knees to balloon and stiffen. Dr. Arthur Weaver, a rheumatologist, diagnosed the most common form of arthritis, termed osteoarthritis. Over time, wear and tear abrades the smooth surface of the joints; the trauma generates prostaglandins; and—in that characteristic vicious cycle of inflammation—the resultant swelling of the joints only worsens the abrasion. Dr. Weaver finally prescribed Voltaren, which is a strong NSAID. "It didn't upset my stomach," Dillon told me. "I have a strong constitution. It just didn't help enough." He's one of those arthritis patients for whom NSAIDs are limited not by their side effects but by their impotency.

About two years ago, Dillon entered a clinical trial of Celebra. "It's been tremendous," he says, with undisguised enthusiasm. He has had no side effects from the treatment, and has enjoyed sustained improvement in his knees. He can now do his job without pain. Still, he points out that, if he misses a single dose, within a day he notices a return of pain and reduced flexibility in his joints. The study Dillon is enrolled in ends in two years; his greatest worry is that if the drug doesn't gain F.D.A. approval by then he may have to go back to the kind of life he had before he took Celebra.

Dillon takes only a moderate dose of Celebra: Monsanto initially proceeded cautiously in its clinical trials, seeking to establish the drug's safety and efficacy before exploring its upper reaches. But with efficient COX-2 inhibitors clinicians may be able to address one of the most vexing scientific questions concerning arthritis: If you could reduce inflammation enough, would a joint be able to heal permanently? Should this prove to be the case, COX-2 inhibitors may represent far more than symptomatic relief. They may offer a means of modifying the underlying disease itself. Potent inhibition of COX-2 also opens up the possibility that noxious and addictive narcotics, like codeine and Percocet, could be superseded—and there's been support for this in clinical trials of Celebra for dental pain. (It's noteworthy that American Home Products, which recently announced plans to merge with Monsanto, makes Advil, an ibuprofen-based pain reliever that Celebra may ultimately render obsolete.)

Excitement about COX-2 inhibitors is growing even among cancer researchers. Several studies published during the past decade have indicated that patients taking NSAIDs have a fifty-per-cent-lower incidence of colon cancer. But only recently have scientists figured out why this might be. Most colon cancer is believed to arise from two sequential mutations. The primary mutation causes levels of COX-2 in the cells to soar, which results in excessive growths called polyps. A second mutation can then cause a polyp to become cancerous. It stands to reason that inhibiting COX-2 would block the first step of the process, and there's now evidence of this in studies of mice specially bred to have the primary mutation. These mice are prone to develop precancerous polyps, but when they're given Celebra, such polyps never develop and cancer never gets started. Clinical trials of Celebra as a cancer preventive are already under way in people who have multiple colonic polyps and are at high risk for colon cancer.

Philip Needleman thinks the results of these trials will mirror what has been seen in the mice. He readily admits that mice are not men, but there is now hard science to explain the reported link between NSAIDs and a lowered incidence of colon cancer. What's more, COX-2 may play a role in other kinds of cancer as well. Researchers are hastening to analyze tumor specimens for the enzyme, and there are indications that breast cancer is also promoted by COX-2.

Alzheimer's disease is another debilitating malady for which COX-2 blockers are being tested. When I asked Needleman why blocking COX-2 might help, he replied, "*Ver veyst?*"—Yiddish for "Who knows?"—and added, "Ask your neighbor Cliff Saper."

Clifford Saper is a professor of neuroscience at Harvard and a prominent figure in the biology and treatment of Alzheimer's disease. Saper told me that there have been fourteen published studies on NSAIDs and Alzheimer's disease which showed a significant decrease in the progression of the disease when NSAIDs are used. Saper had been tracking the research, and he and Needleman talked about it. "At the time, everyone was focussed on arthritis," Saper said. "But when Phil is struck by an idea nothing can stop him. He's like a force of nature."

How might a COX-2 inhibitor be helpful in treating Alzheimer's? Saper points out that when a neuron in the brain is damaged an inflammatory reaction occurs, but that—as happens with arthritis—this inflammation can itself cause more damage. Celebra, he said, promises to "break open the vicious cycle of inflammation in Alzheimer's." A national study of Celebra is under way, with more than three hundred patients who have mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease. Saper says he expects to find that the drug slows the rate of cognitive deterioration by at least fifty per cent.

The potential market for COX-2 inhibitors is enormous. Analysts have projected sales of up to five billion dollars a year in the United States. (Prozac, by comparison, has sales of two billion dollars.) Monsanto is seeking initial F.D.A. approval only for the treatment of arthritis. But Celebra is likely to have considerable "off-label use"—as physicians use it to replace narcotics for relief of moderate pain and, in particular, for analgesia before and after operations, when conventional NSAIDs can cause uncontrolled bleeding. And if Celebra should eventually prove to be a safe way of preventing colon cancer and slowing Alzheimer's disease, the sales would be stratospheric. The total market could easily exceed ten billion dollars yearly in the United States alone.

Given these figures, the arrival of Celebra, which represents not merely a new drug but a new *category* of drugs, has invited fierce competition. Merck, a formidable opponent, has already completed advanced clinical trials of a COX-2 inhibitor of its own, called Vioxx. The development of both Vioxx and Celebra required screening tens of thousands of compounds in tedious test-tube assays. A second generation of COX-2 inhibitors will take advantage of recent developments in computerized drug design. Computers can now assess how different chemical structures fit into the nooks and crannies of the COX-2 molecule. It turns out that there are subtle but important differences between the surfaces of COX-1 and COX-2: the latter enzyme has a so-called side pocket, into which a selective blocker like Celebra fits snugly. In the meantime, Needleman has confirmed that Monsanto's computer analysis of the COX-2 molecule has already yielded a "son of Celebra," or second-generation inhibitor. Celebra has a thousandfold propensity to block COX-2 over COX-1; the new compound's selectivity is forty-two-thousandfold.

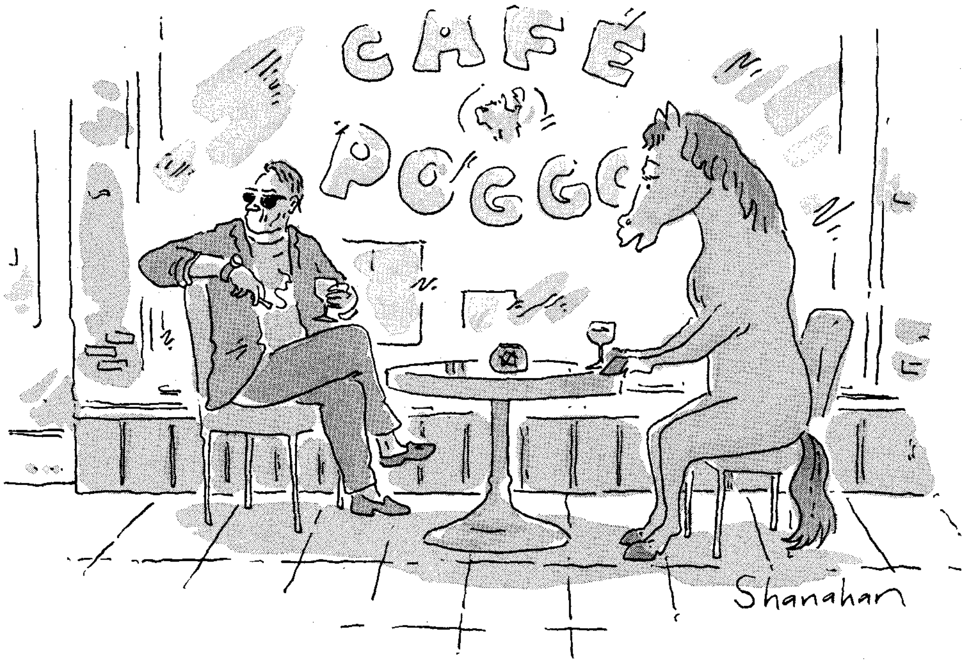
But could there be a third COX enzyme? Sir John Vane has recently speculated that there might be such an enzyme, which could mediate pain and fever rather than inflammation. "I look every day at new gene sequences in the database," Needleman told me, referring to the growing repository of DNA codes that have been deciphered. He is seeking similarities between recently discovered genes of unknown function and the known gene sequences of COX-1 and COX-2. So far, he hasn't seen any evidence of a COX-3, nor has anyone else, as far as we know. But when the stakes are this high, scientists and their companies are constantly in a state of restless vigilance. "What you don't know worries you," Needleman admits.

"IF our luck holds, in less than two years I won't have to do this to you," Lee Simon said as he injected my elbow with cortisone; I'd banged it a couple of weeks earlier and had developed bursitis.

Dr. Simon, a colleague of mine at Harvard, works on innovative treatments for arthritis. He helped design the Celebra trials, and was one of the organizers of the First International Workshop on COX-2, which was held in New Orleans this past September. He's known in the field for having a sharply critical attitude toward most of the new therapies being touted for inflammation. Over the two decades of his career, he has seen many false starts and has developed an ingrained wariness. So I was startled by his assessment of the new COX-2 inhibitor.

"Celebra is incredible," he said, and went on to point out that more than ten thousand patients have received the drug—many, like Rich Dillon, for more than a year—and no side effects have been observed. "None," he repeated. He knew this because of the lengths to which he and others have gone to look for toxicity—even peering right into people's stomachs via endoscopy. Take a handful of aspirin, and you'll start to hear ringing in your ears, but in studies of animals that are much more sensitive to COX inhibition than people are, researchers had to administer an amount of Celebra that was at least a hundred times as great as the therapeutic dose before any side effects began to appear. Twenty per cent of a group of people taking naproxen (the active ingredient of Aleve) had developed gastric ulcers after only one week of treatment; none of those taking Celebra had. Investigators had also isolated platelets from Celebra-treated patients and found the cells to be unaffected. The clinical trials in dental pain, rheumatoid arthritis, and osteoarthritis had proved that Celebra significantly and powerfully alleviates pain and, in arthritis, also improves the range of joint motion.

"It seems too good to be true," I told Lee Simon. Clinical investigators always have to guard against euphoria. It's easy to be blinded by the love of your hypothesis, to scant the counterevidence the way a parent overlooks the misbehavior of a child. Simon conceded that the clinical experience is still limited in time: no one has taken a COX-2 inhibitor every day for decades. But so far all the signs are good—and for people like me they are more than good. I imagine myself, in the year 2000, popping a pill, comfortably bending down to tighten the laces of my sneakers, and beginning the twenty-six miles from Hopkinton to Boston. ♦



"You don't whisper anymore."

LETTER FROM CHINA

FAKING IT

How the Italians have taught the Chinese to preserve their ancient masterpieces instead of copying them.

BY ALEXANDER STILLE

MICHELE CORDARO, the director of Italy's Central Conservation Institute, in Rome, has devoted most of his fifty-five years to antiquities. Tall and overweight, with a head of unruly gray hair, Cordaro has, despite his bearish figure, a refined and professorial look, in his dark corduroys, checked tweed jacket, green sweater-vest, and tortoiseshell glasses. He grew up in Sicily, surrounded by Greek ruins, and studied art history amid the exquisite decadence of Palermo, with its converted mosques, fading red-domed churches, abandoned Norman palaces, and collapsing Baroque façades. So his interest in conservation was natural. In the sixties, he attended the lectures of Cesare Brandi, who founded the renowned Conservation Institute and has been the director since 1995. In that job he has overseen the restoration of parts of the ancient Roman Forum and Pompeii. Yet even he was astonished when he saw the tomb of China's first emperor, Qin Shihuang, near the city of Xi'an: vast underground pits lined with row after row of terra-cotta soldiers, some seven thousand in all, each individually sculpted and slightly larger than life. "Perhaps the only tomb one can compare it to in scale is the Pyramids in Egypt," he says.

In addition to being one of the great sites of the ancient world, Qin Shihuang's tomb represents a great leap of civilization: ancient Chinese kings actually had their retinues buried alive so that they would be well attended in the next life. Qin Shihuang, who unified China and standardized its written language before he died, in 210 B.C., decided that clay statues of his soldiers could meet his needs for eternity. Much like the Egyptian Pharaohs, Shihuang was "creating a 'double' of the world above the ground underground," explains Cordaro, who first visited Xi'an in 1995.

Nothing in Cordaro's experience, however, had prepared him for the next stop on that trip. His Chinese colleagues took him straight from the ancient tomb to a modern factory where replicas of the terra-cotta soldiers were being churned out. "They proudly pointed to the copies, as if to say, 'See, we can still do it!'" Cordaro says. It was as if Italian art authorities were to take a foreign visitor to a plant outside Florence where plaster knockoffs of Michelangelo's "David" were being manufactured. But the Chinese copies were carefully produced, with the government's permission, from molds made from the original statues, and were speckled with small imperfections and flecks of mud, as if they had been recently dug out of the ground. "Many of the warriors that have gone touring around the West are fakes," Cordaro says. "We call them fakes, but the Chinese have a different sense of the value of original and copy." This difference has caused some moments of friction between Chinese and Western art historians when it has come to organizing exhibitions. A few years ago, the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, cancelled a show of ancient Chinese bells when it discovered that the Chinese were planning to send reproductions.

The Italians had been asked by the Chinese government to set up a modern laboratory and school of art conservation in Xi'an, but when Cordaro arrived he quickly realized that he and his colleagues would be confronting a set of attitudes toward the past and toward art conservation which was radically at odds with cherished Western ideas of antiquity and originality. "The Chinese, like the Japanese and some other Asian nations, have a tradition of conserving by copying, or rebuilding," he says. This made considerable sense in China, where until recently almost every-

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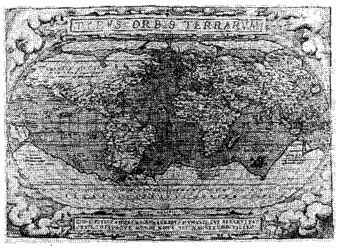

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thing—including palaces, temples, and houses—was built of wood. Ever since the pyramid age in Egypt, Westerners have created monuments in stone, hoping that they would last forever. The Chinese pursued a different kind of permanence by working in perishable materials that could simply be replaced as needed, the way our own bodies replace old cells with new ones while we remain "ourselves." A famous example of this seemingly Zen approach to conservation is the Ise Shrine, in Japan—a Shinto temple that was originally built in the seventh century A.D. and is ritually destroyed and rebuilt every twenty years. The Japanese think of it as being thirteen hundred years old, yet no single piece dates back further than 1993, when it was last remade. This concept is so alien to Western art historians that the Ise Shrine and many other Japanese monuments are not on the list of World Heritage Sites recognized by UNESCO, because they are not considered "ancient" and "authentic."

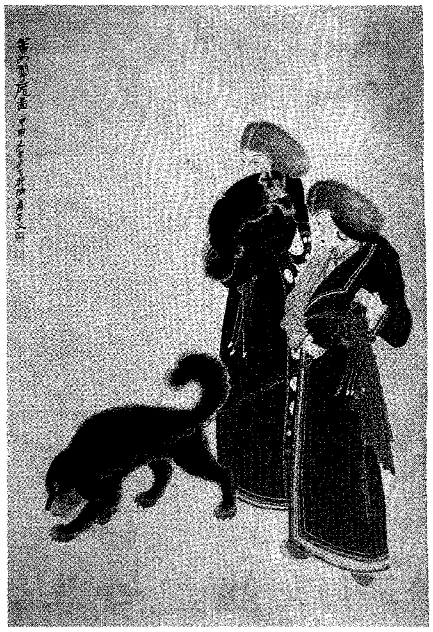
These different approaches to conservation are related to profound cultural divisions. Westerners have a linear sense of time. In their view, the clock starts at one fixed point in time. China and Japan have traditionally regarded time as cyclical, and they re-started the calendar for each new emperor, assuming that dynasties rose and fell while society remained fundamentally the same. In a world that was both eternal and ever-changing, rebuilding monuments made perfect sense. Similarly, copying an existing work of art was seen as a sign of reverence rather than as a lack of originality. Though Westerners have long copied the masters as an art-school exercise, China's best artists, even at the height of their fame, would reproduce the work of earlier painters, right down to fake signatures and seals. The most famous Chinese artist of the twentieth century, Chang Dai-chien, was a well-known forger, who made and sold thousands of paintings attributed to ancient Chinese masters while also enjoying widespread acclaim for the work that he signed with his own name.

"This system of conserving by copying or rebuilding works well as long as you keep the artisan traditions intact," Cordaro explained to me. "The problem is that those traditions have broken down in China, as they have in many countries. Now builders there are replacing wood with concrete and cement." Once the continuity of Chinese imperial civilization came to an end, knowledge of traditional pigments, resins, and textiles, and techniques of painting, wood carving, and building, quickly began to disappear. With the first wave of industrialization, following the Republican Revolution, which overthrew the last emperor, in 1911, the tradition of conserving by rebuilding began to falter, and fell completely out of favor in 1949, when the Communists came to power and condemned most of the imperial art as useless baggage of a feudal society.

In Beijing alone, during the Cultural Revolution of the late nineteen-sixties, Chairman Mao's Red Guards are known to have destroyed some 4,922 out of 6,843 officially designated sites of historical and cultural interest, burning temples, hacking at statues, and defiling imperial tombs. At a certain point, they approached the Forbidden City itself, but here the Chinese Premier, Zhou Enlai, drew the line, and dispatched Red Army troops to protect the old Imperial Palace.

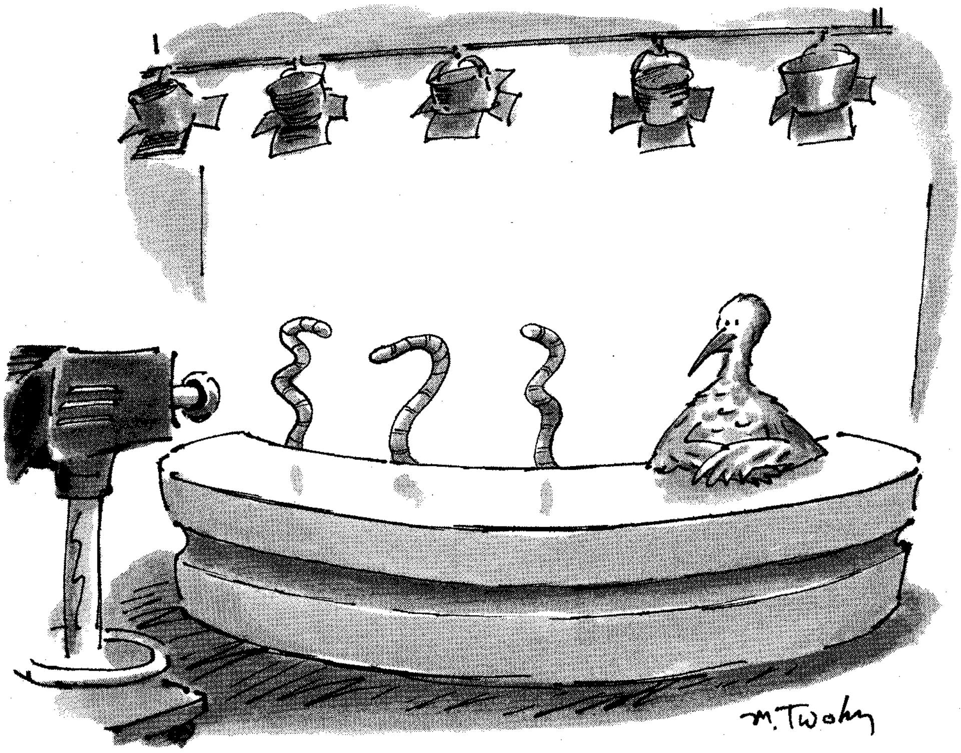
Yet even the Forbidden City is hardly ancient as we in the West understand the term. The imperial palace was erected in the fifteenth century and has been rebuilt countless times. Today, the paint is shiny-new fire-engine red, and the detail work is surprisingly unrefined. The Summer Palace, the imperial residence outside Beijing, looks more like a Disneyland re-creation or a Chinatown restaurant than like a genuine eighteenth-century relic of the Qing dynasty.

Just in the last few years, the Chinese have awakened to the fact that—because the artisan tradition has broken down—precious little of their physical past will remain if they don't adopt



Original—and fake—terra-cotta soldiers from the tomb of China's first emperor have toured the world's museums. Right: "Tibetan Women with Mastiff and Puppy," 1945, by the respected artist and master forger Chang Dai-chien.

DENNIS COX/CHINA STOCK; COURTESY MUSÉE CERNUSCHI, PARIS



"And now here's Jerome with an overview."

• •

Western conservation strategies. But this is not a culturally neutral act. Recognizing the importance of the original hand of the artist places a value on individualism that is foreign to Chinese culture. Indeed, the struggles of Cordaro—the Western missionary of conservation—against copying and remaking are related to the difficulties that Western businesses face when they try to stop the Chinese from pirating computer software, music CDs, and movie videos. "The Chinese do not have a particular sense of individual ownership of cultural monuments or of intellectual property," Ken DeWoskin, a professor of Chinese studies at the University of Michigan, explains. "The great books of Chinese literature—'The Romance of the Three Kingdoms,' 'The Water Margin'—have been rewritten many times. There are different versions by different authors; some might have a happy ending, others not."

It was natural that China, in seeking conservation help, would turn to Italy—another nation rich in antiquities, but with a four-hundred-year tradition of digging them up and trying to preserve them. In 1995, the Chinese and Italian governments signed an agreement to set up the Xi'an Center for the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Relics, with the Italians providing more than three million dollars in high-tech equipment and a staff of instructors from Cordaro's Conservation Institute, and the Chinese supplying offices, personnel, and twenty-three students to learn a Western approach to art conservation. Xi'an was chosen as the site of the new center because it had been the capital of ancient China on and off from the accession of the first emperor, in 221 B.C., until the collapse of the Tang dynasty, in 907 A.D., and has vast archeological riches that are largely unexcavated.

When Cordaro made a follow-up visit to China in April, I decided to accompany him.

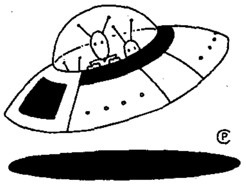
Driving in from the Xi'an airport, through the lush green valley of the Wei River, we passed more than a dozen enormous grassy man-made mounds, some several hundred feet long and thirty or forty feet high: each one was an unexcavated imperial tomb. Here, as in Rome, it is difficult to put a shovel to the ground without striking something ancient. In 1974, a peasant digging a well uncovered fragments from Emperor Qin Shihuang's vast terra-cotta army. Exploratory digging at one of the burial mounds near the airport has revealed another army of warriors, also vast in number but with each figure only about two and a half feet high. The other mounds have not yet been explored and may well yield armies of their own.

But the riches of China's past still underground stand in stark contrast with the wasteland aboveground. Like other large Chinese cities, Xi'an today looks like one enormous construction site, its skyline bristling with tall cranes and the giant concrete shells of new high-rise buildings. With the Chinese economy growing at nearly ten per cent a year—five times as fast as the economies of most Western countries—capitalism in China is on fast-forward, and shifts of construction and demolition crews often work twenty-four hours a day. The air in Xi'an, as in most of China's other urban areas, is so horribly polluted that the weather is permanently overcast, the sky like a lead-colored roof close overhead.

Although Xi'an once rivalled Rome and Constantinople in beauty and importance, little of the ancient city is left, and the few remaining temples and shrines have been crudely restored and repainted. Only the medieval city walls, which date from the fourteenth century, before the Ming dynasty moved the capital to Beijing, are authentically old. But they are festooned with strings of light bulbs and illuminated at night with a purple-filtered spotlight—which gives the city a kind of disco feel. The center of Xi'an looks like a sprawling version of Times Square, with block after block of flashing electronic billboards.

When you see the city during the daytime, though, you realize that it actually looks better lit up at night: almost all the new buildings in Xi'an—and, indeed, in almost all of China—are simply reinforced-concrete boxes covered with the kind of industrial white tile you might find in a gas-station rest room. “Swimming-pool architecture,” the Italians at the Xi’an conservation center call it. Almost as a guilty afterthought on the part of the architect, many of these modern buildings have been capped with upturned Chinese eaves, which perch on the buildings like ill-fitting wigs. Whole neighborhoods of traditional courtyard houses, crafted in brick and wood during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, have been bulldozed to widen roads and build high-rises, though a few of the old quarters have been preserved for tourists. The Chinese, for the most part, are surprisingly unsentimental about these changes. “The Cultural Revolution not only destroyed our monuments; it destroyed people’s feeling for them,” said a sensitive young architect we met on the trip—one of a very few Chinese who appeared to have thought about the present situation. “It killed off the sense of beauty.”

THE Xi’an conservation center is housed within the recently constructed Shaanxi History Museum. The building is typical of the new Chinese architecture: a set of concrete boxes with a few “traditional” Chinese elements, made of cement, tacked on. On the upper floor of the center are a main classroom; a small library, with texts in Chinese, Italian, and English; a computer room; a laboratory; and a storeroom for the art objects in various states of conservation. On the lower floor are scientific laboratories, where technicians are trained in using X-ray equipment and electron microscopes, and in performing chemical analysis on art objects. Students in white coats sitting on stools are hunched over ancient objects: a woman with something that looks like a dentist’s drill is removing encrusted dirt from the interior of a cracked bronze vessel; another is working on a terra-cotta figure whose head sits detached and alone on a table a few feet away. Technicians X-ray a vase to find its hidden stress lines and to determine whether its handles are original. There is a rotating faculty of seven or eight Italian instructors, who generally come for several weeks or a few months at a time.



“We have an interdisciplinary approach,” Cordaro says, in which archeology, art history, conservation, and scientific analysis are combined. He explains that, in order to understand the current condition of an object, one often needs to know where it was found and how it was used, yet the Chinese have had a tendency to separate archeology and conservation, sending objects out for “conservation” the way a doctor might send off a blood sample for tests. This can be damaging to the artifacts. For example, in Lintong, the suburb of Xi’an where Qin Shihuang’s tomb was discovered, the terra-cotta warriors that had originally been painted in bright colors lost their paint during the excavation: because the statues dried more quickly than the earth around them, the paint adhered to the moister ground. “It’s a problem that could be solved, but a very difficult and expensive one,” Cordaro explained. “One would have to create a hermetically sealed environment at the excavation site.” The Chinese understand the problem but do not have the resources or the expertise to deal with it themselves, and though Cordaro’s center was situated in Xi’an partly to address this problem, he now understands that “the Chinese will never let any Westerners work at Lintong.” When the tomb was unearthed, in 1974, during the Cultural Revolution, Mao’s supporters quickly turned the discovery to their political advantage, comparing Mao to the first emperor and promoting the site as an important symbol of national unity. Even today, ceding control of its conservation would be a blow to national pride.

In a sense, the Italian-Chinese experiment in art conservation is a microcosm of China’s larger dilemma: the Chinese authorities are happy to have Western equipment, money, and expertise but are anxious to maintain political control over a project, whatever it may be. As has happened with economic reform in general, the Italians found coöperation and enthusiasm among top-level officials but pockets of intense resistance among local officials fearful of losing power. The Ital-

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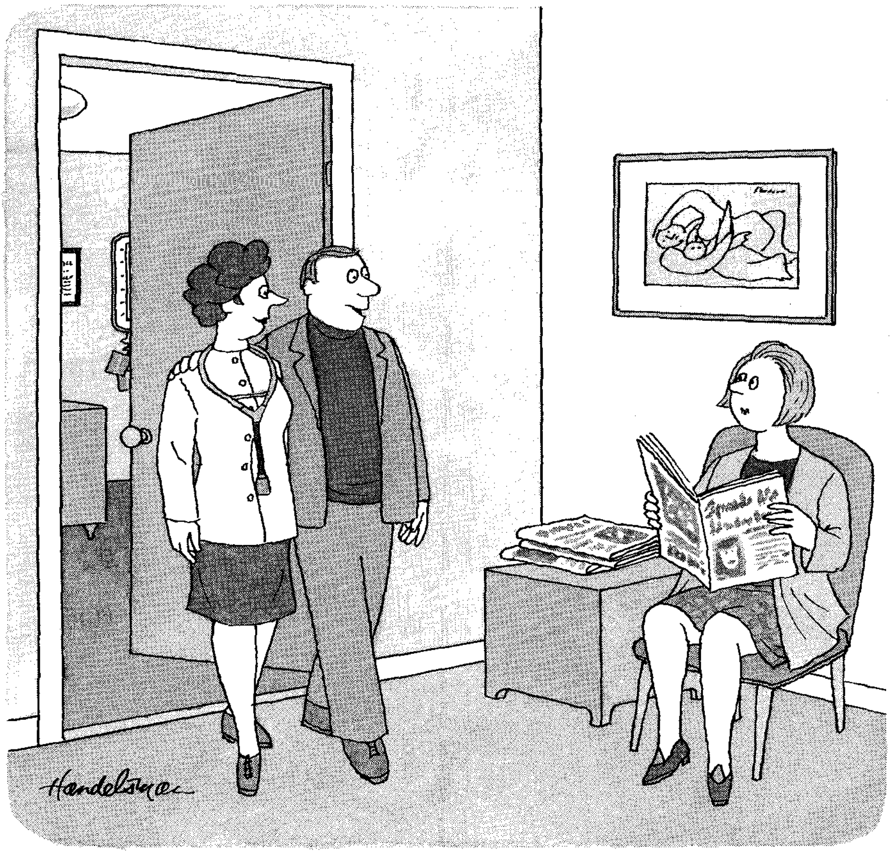
ians began to realize that many of the officials in Xi'an saw the center primarily as a means of acquiring control of the expensive high-tech laboratories after the initial three-year agreement concludes, later this year. Indeed, the Italians' contract has not been renewed, and that means they will quit Xi'an, leaving all their equipment behind.

Nevertheless, Cordaro considers the experiment a success. In two years, the center has managed to conserve enough artifacts to fill an excellent small museum: Zhou-dynasty bronzes from the second millennium B.C., with beautifully crafted handles in animal shapes; neolithic ceramic pots, with elegant geometric designs; menacing-looking deities that stood guard over a royal tomb of the Han dynasty (206 B.C. to 220 A.D.); an extraordinary bronze "tree of life" sculpture, with a fluttering of delicate bronze leaves; and two miniature terra-cotta warriors—one still covered in mud and the other almost perfectly intact, its colors nearly as bright as the day they were painted.

The Italians have found that they need to break the Chinese students of certain ingrained habits of thought. "They want to remake the object," Paola Donati, a conservator from Rome who specializes in ancient bronzes, says. The approach of the Italian Conservation Institute—an approach shared in most Western conservation labs—is based on three principles: all work must be "recognizable," "reversible," and "compatible." Thus, a Western conservator would piece together the fragments of a bronze vase with a removable glue, which would leave faintly visible cracks, so that the viewer could distinguish the workmanship of the original craftsman from that of the conservator, and any material used to reconstruct missing parts would be compatible with the original, both chemically and aesthetically. In most Chinese museums, the tendency would be to solder the pieces together—a process that is both irreversible and generally unrecognizable.

While we were in Xi'an, Cordaro taught a course in the theory of conservation, with special emphasis on copying and rebuilding works of art. His slides of famous classical statues—the Winged Victory, the Venus de Milo, the Laocoön, and the Apollo Belvedere, among others—were a veritable parade of mutilation, from missing arms and missing legs to chopped-off noses. The Chinese students, with no background in Western art history, probably found the pictures quite strange, and the Chinese interpreter appeared to have a highly uncertain grasp of Italian—she kept asking what the word "reversible" meant—so the opportunities for lost meaning were many. All this heightened the sense that we were at several removes from the Chinese. The students at the school were refreshingly open and candid—products of a much freer, post-Mao culture—but considerable diffidence and rigidity were evident in people over forty, and especially in those who worked for the state bureaucracy. Whenever I asked to speak with archeologists or museum curators in Xi'an about problems of art conservation, the Chinese-Italian interpreter became panicky. "Please don't, these are very delicate political questions here," he said. "Wait until we go to Luoyang."



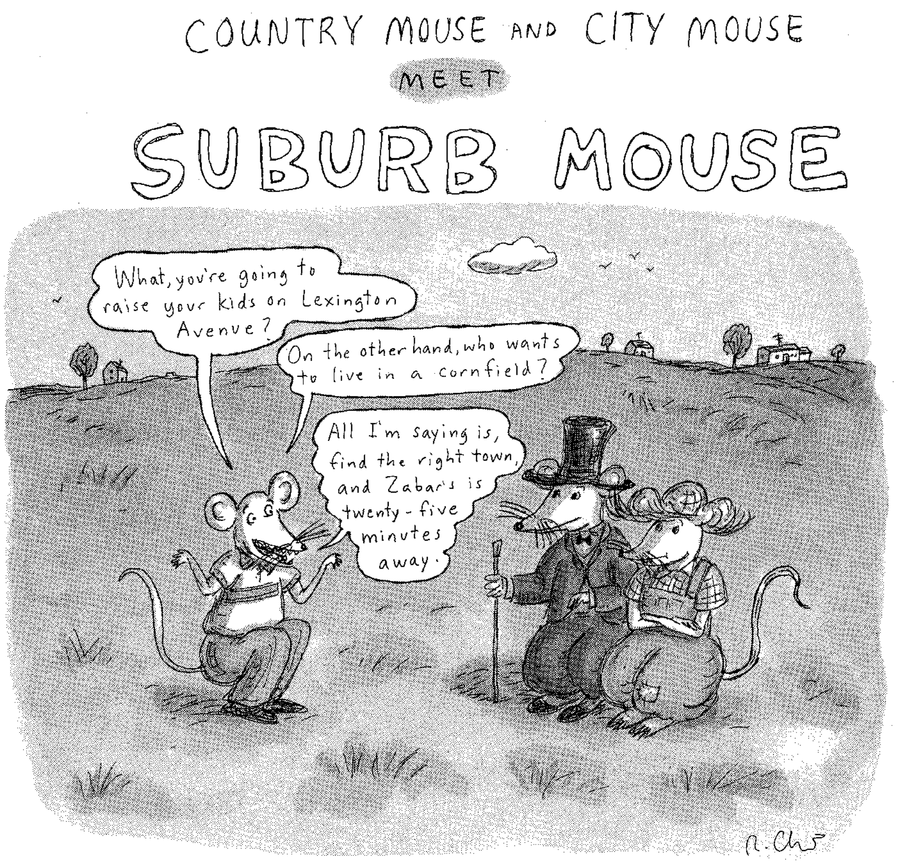
"Good news, honey! Dr. Bingham couldn't detect any impotence."

In Luoyang, however, my efforts to interview Chinese officials met with only slightly more success. Luoyang, about two hundred miles east of Xi'an, in the province of Henan, is another former Chinese capital. The city, whose history goes back to about 2100 B.C., had vied with Xi'an to accommodate the conservation center, and now that the Italians were going to be leaving Xi'an the cultural authorities of Luoyang saw an opportunity to get some help from the Italians for their own monuments, which include the famous Buddhist Longmen Caves.

We were scheduled to visit the caves with the director of the site and one of Luoyang's chief archeologists, and they insisted on picking us up in Xi'an, even though it was an eight-hour drive each way and we could have easily taken the train. It was not clear if this was an example of extreme Chinese courtesy or a kind of holiday from the two officials' work routine, giving them the chance to commandeer banquets on the expense account and drive around in big black cars with tinted windows marked “V.I.P.” Certainly their objective was not to provide an opportunity to discuss the problems of Luoyang’s artistic patrimony, because Cordaro and I were put in one car and the Chinese drove off in the other.

We reconvened for lunch at a roadside restaurant, in what turned out to be the first in a series of increasingly elaborate, highly choreographed banquets in the course of three days. At each meal, the seat of honor was marked by a glass with a napkin in it, folded to form a dragon—the symbol of the emperor’s power. The other napkins were folded like lotus flowers. The ranking official occupied the dragon seat while the rest of us were arranged by strict protocol to his left and right. Apart from continual toasts, the Chinese did not address a word to either Cordaro or me but talked animatedly among themselves. At the next meal, we would be introduced to a local official a notch or two up the political pecking order, who took the dragon seat and bumped the “emperor” of the previous banquet over into the lotus flowers.

Eventually, I was able to ask a few questions about China’s attitude toward its antiquities. Invariably, I received stock replies: “China’s rich and glorious past is extremely important and must be safeguarded.” But one seemingly innocuous question caused consternation: “Do you think it is particularly important, in this moment in which China has opened itself to the West, that it act in order to protect its own cultural identity?” At each banquet, the presiding Chinese official suggested that the question would be better answered by someone higher in the government. This continued until I was granted a twenty-minute audience with the mayor of Luoyang, who, by way of answering my inquiries, directed me to a previously published speech he’d made, “Protect and Develop the Famous City of Luoyang and Bring It to a More Splendid Future.”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What, you're going to raise your kids on Lexington Avenue?
On the other hand, who wants to live in a cornfield?
All I'm saying is, find the right town, and Zabar's is twenty-five minutes away.
R. Chast

THE Longmen Caves cover an entire cliffside, nearly a mile long and a hundred feet high, that runs along the banks of the Yellow River outside Luoyang. From a distance, the cliff, of honey-colored limestone, looks like a beehive, because its surface is pocked with 2,345 caves, niches, and grottoes. The caves contain an estimated hundred thousand images of the Buddha, carved between 493 A.D. and 960 A.D. The Buddhas range in size from a few inches to, in one case, about the height of a five-story building. The quality of the sculptures—the work of countless hands over hundreds of years—varies greatly, but the best work is comparable to the finest sculptures anywhere in the world. The largest group of statues, in what is called the Fengxiansi Cave, is also among the most expressive and the most delicately carved. At the center of this group sits a fifty-foot Buddha, his eyes downcast in serene contemplation; on one side of him a Heavenly King nimbly crushes a demon with an elegant swagger and a muscular thirty-foot Lishi guardian figure wards off evil with an angry expression and eyes that seem to shoot lightning. Pictures of the caves had not prepared Cordaro for the scale and the beauty of the site, which is one of the most important in Buddhist art. The quality of the sculpture far surpassed that of the terra-cotta warriors, he said. “This is truly a work of world importance, and it must be protected.”

There was a steady rain on the day of our visit, and that made it easier to understand the conservation problems at the site. Water was running everywhere, on the walls of the caves and down the sides of the statues. Because Luoyang became a major industrial city after the Communist revolution, this precipitation is part acid rain. Many of the figures had originally been painted, and one can still see dabs of red pigment sticking to them tenaciously amid rivulets of water. “The amazing thing is not how much has been lost but how there is any paint left at all,” said Cordaro, whose large, somewhat awkward-seeming body became suddenly agile whenever it was time to examine a conservation problem. Some of the grottoes have a coating that craftsmen of the Tang dynasty (from 618 to 907 A.D.) applied to them to prevent wind and water erosion, but no one knows any longer what the coating consists of. The chemists at the conservation center in Xi’an are trying to unravel this mystery, which could be crucial to giving the grottoes another thousand years of life. More than a million people a year come to see the Longmen Caves, and they are one of China's most popular tourist sites, after Beijing's Forbidden City, the Great Wall, and the terra-cotta army in Xi'an. Luoyang's giant factories are now laying off workers in an effort to compete in the market economy, and city officials hope that tourism can become the engine of a new service economy.

Next, our hosts took us to see the Luoyang Museum of the Tombs, where the city displays recent discoveries from nearby archeological sites that date back well over two thousand years. Twenty-six ancient tombs have been painstakingly dismantled and reassembled in the museum. But instead of placing them in a temperature-and-humidity-controlled environment aboveground the curators rebuilt the tombs underground and lined them up in a row along a dank basement corridor, in order to re-create the atmosphere of an actual tomb complex. It was an imaginative idea, but from a conservation point of view it has been a disaster. One reason for removing the tombs from their original site was to protect them from excessive moisture, but rebuilding them underground has aggravated the problem severely. The tombs are small, generally about ten or fifteen feet long by six feet wide, and they fill up with humidity like a sauna until the walls, which are frescoed, are dripping with water. Under these conditions, allowing visitors to enter the tombs is particularly bad, because opening and closing the doors changes the relative humidity, making the frescoed surfaces expand and contract. One could see flakes of paint literally curling off the ceiling. Since the tombs have no artificial lighting, one can get only glimpses, by flickering candlelight, of this vanishing world of ancient emperors riding chariots and of chimerical animals, copulating dragons, fierce tomb guardians, and a trompe-l'oeil painting of a woman peering out of a window.

From photographs one could see that the color of the paint had faded dramatically in the five years the museum has been open. As a result, most of the tombs have already been closed to the public—entirely defeating the purpose of the museum. Throughout our visit, Cordaro kept shaking his head with a mixture of amusement and horror. "To dismantle underground tombs and re-create them underground," he said at one point. "This is the quintessence of China: they have created a fake out of something real!"

The Chinese archeologist who excavated most of the tombs recognizes the gravity of the situation. He has the pieces of another tomb stored in boxes, because he is reluctant to rebuild it underground. Cordaro asked if we could see some of those fragments. "I will show them to you if you promise not to be angry with me," the archeologist said, humorously. Museum workers hauled several large wooden crates out of a storeroom and opened them with a crowbar. Inside were hundreds of small pieces of delicately painted frescoes, in brilliantly preserved reds, blacks, and whites. "They're perfect," Cordaro said, noting the astonishing contrast with the badly faded colors of the reassembled tombs.

The following morning, our Luoyang hosts took us to see a wooden Qing-dynasty house, completed in 1733, that, miraculously, has not been restored or rebuilt. A walled compound, with four pavilions spaced across three internal courtyards, the building complex had been a merchants' guildhall during the imperial era. The pavilions were dilapidated, and the wood was unpainted and infested with termites, but their forms were almost perfectly intact, and they were infinitely more elaborate and more beautiful than any of the twentieth-century remakes of ancient buildings that we had seen. The eaves were an explosion of architectural detail, actual works of sculpture in wood, like the flying buttresses of a Gothic cathedral that mutate into gargoyles. The finials were fashioned into writhing serpents or roaring dragons; the latticework was carved, like lace, into a pattern of peonies and birds. The wooden beams on the ceilings were painted in astonishing vermillions, lapis lazulis, and gold leaf—the colors at once more brilliant and more subtle than anything in the Forbidden City. There was a remarkable glazed terra-cotta emblem of a dragon and a phoenix—simultaneously a painting and a sculpture—which rivalled the ceramic sculptures of the Della Robbia brothers in Renaissance Florence. After seeing all the crude modern reconstructions of ancient buildings, we suddenly experienced the sensation of looking at the real thing. But the excitement of discovery was tempered by the realization of how much has been lost in China: if a merchants' guildhall in a provincial city was as elaborate and beautiful as this, what must the more important buildings—the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace—have been like before they were rebuilt?

"As a conservation job, this is so easy as to be banal," Cordaro said to me. "It's in almost perfectly preserved condition. You need to do as little as possible to protect what is already here. Get rid of the termites, plug the leaks in the roof, and apply a consolidant to the wood to keep it from disintegrating any further. Above all, we have to keep them from 'restoring' it."

As we drove out of Luoyang, we passed through a long stretch of verdant uncultivated fields. As is true of Xi'an, there are vast unexcavated parts of this city's ancient past—tombs of emperors and Chinese nobility. To its credit, the city of Luoyang has prevented any building near the archeological sites, so the fields stretch for miles of brilliant green, like a bumper crop of antiquities waiting to be harvested. "The cities are lost," Cordaro said, noting the monotonous drab squalor of modern Luoyang. But China is pregnant with the richness of its past, which lies just within the belly of the soil. Chinese archeology is still in its infancy—about where Egyptology was in the middle of the nineteenth century—and there are many major discoveries ahead. And China itself is changing so rapidly that it is impossible to predict how the landscape may be transformed in a single generation. What has gone will not return, but perhaps large segments of China's buried past—even entire terra-cotta cities and imperial courts—will emerge from underground. ♦

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ANNALS OF INDUSTRY

THE BILLION-DOLLAR BLADE

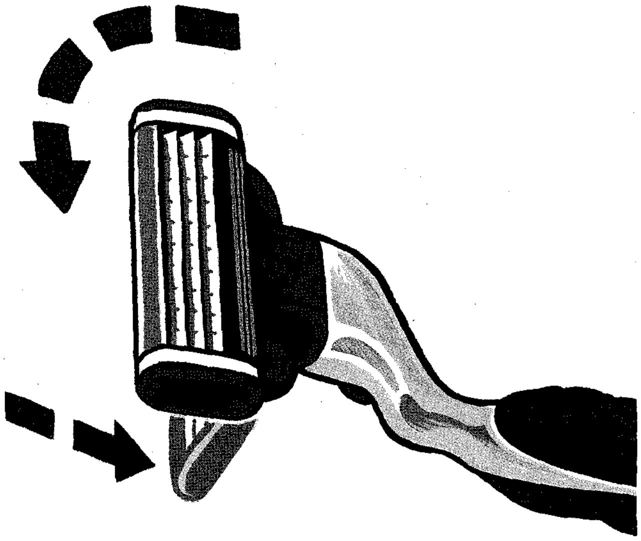
How the Gillette Company reinvented the razor—and itself.

BY JAMES SUROWIECKI

MILES YEOMAN is a tinkerer. His skin is pale pink, his hair is a faded brown, and his metal-rimmed glasses are thick enough to obviate the need for safety goggles. He spends his days in a small lab room, where he has put together a high-powered stereo microscope, a laser-guided measuring device, and a monitor able to reproduce 3-D images, and has jury-rigged them into a machine that can tell you, with remarkable accuracy, how well you've shaved.

At forty-times-normal magnification, a freshly shaved face looks something like a clear-cut forest seen from an airplane. Skin appears uneven and craggy, riven with streaks of broken red, and interspersed with black stumps cut at irregular angles. Peering through his stereo microscope, Yeoman guides the laser pointer to each stump, and marks its tip with a yellow dot. Later, he'll download the data into a computer, which will tell him just how much hair is cut by each stroke of the Gillette Company's newest razor.

Yeoman works in one of Gillette's major research-and-development laboratories, which is known as U.K. R.D.L., and is situated on the outskirts of Reading, England. There are only three real concerns here: skin, hair, and metal. Reading, the Los Alamos of shaving, is where the world's most advanced technology in imaging, metallurgy, and design is brought to bear on that most mundane of objects—the stainless-steel razor blade. It's the place where Gillette's newest razor, Mach 3, was born.



The Mach 3 may make five-o'clock shadow a thing of the past.

The product of seven years of continuous effort and an unprecedented seven hundred and fifty million dollars in manufacturing and development costs alone, Mach 3 will make its début this July and by the turn of the century should be the most popular razor in America. Within two years, Gillette should be selling 1.2 billion Mach 3 blades each year. And Gillette needs Mach 3 to succeed in order to sustain the rapid profit growth that has made its stock among the fastest-climbing blue chips of the decade, and the company itself a dramatic study in corporate self-renovation. In the next few months, a deluge of Mach 3 ads will hit television and magazines. If Gillette prevails in the marketplace, though, it will be not because its advertising is superior to the competition's but because its razor is.

HOUSED in a low-slung red brick building that looks like a lot of junior high schools built in the fifties, U.K. R.D.L. is a far cry from the gleaming modernist hives of most corporate labs. Its employees wander around on industrial-quality linoleum floors, and gossip about balky spectroscopes by a coffee machine that looks

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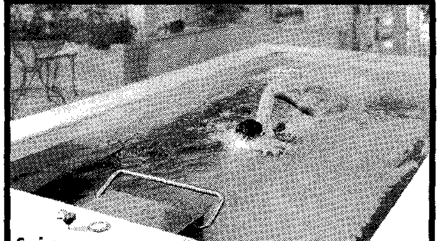

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—Robin Robertson

left over from the days of the Macmillan Government. They wear short-sleeved dress shirts and white lab coats. Old-fashioned safety posters adorn the walls; one shows a bevy of hands erupting from a toolbox, with the legend "These are your most valuable tools." As Yeoman downloads data from his stereoscope rig, all around him other scientists and engineers are doing similar work, using handmade machines that have names like "hair-response rig," "strain-guard razor," and "laser Raman spectroscope." When you roll the "robust friction device"—a razor with wires sprouting from it—across your face, a nearby computer screen fills with numbers indicating how much friction it's exerting. A few rooms down the hall, a young engineer sits at a Silicon Graphics workstation and applies himself to "finite element modelling," which means (as he helpfully explains) that he's trying to duplicate "the interaction between shaver, hair, and skin." I peer over his shoulder at what looks like an animated sequence of a blade pulling and cutting. If the machine works, you should be able to see how well a blade prototype performs without actually making one. It separates workable ideas from whimsical ones.

U.K. R.D.L. is attached to a Gillette factory, and when you walk through the lab's entrance you can hear the hum of large machines and the beeping of forklifts. It's all very grimy and real, and it carries a not very subtle message to the boffins: Don't just come up with cool ideas. Come up with cool ideas we can make.

"We're looking for the right sort of scientists," says John Terry, who was the director of the lab when the preliminary work was done on Mach 3, and who is now the director of its Boston counterpart, BRAD (for Boston Research and Development). "If their aim is solely to create knowledge, it won't work for us. We're here to spot the thing that will make a difference in performance—that will lead to a new product." Terry, an Englishman with a shock of white hair, bright-blue eyes, and a ready laugh, is a thirty-year Gillette veteran. He has an elfin manner, as if playing with razors all day long were just more fun than any one person should be allowed to have. He earned a doctorate in metallurgy, worked on blade technology at Gillette when he was in his late twenties, and then, in 1965, joined the government, which had embarked on a crash program to bring the economy into the space age. "I got to talk to people in all these different industries and study various problems in manufacturing and technology," Terry explains to me as we walk back to the Reading lab after lunch in the company's cafeteria.

Yes, but why abandon rocket science for . . . razor blades?

There's a hint of reproval in his reply: "You want to be somewhere where you're actually *producing* something, don't you?"

GILLETTE never launches a new razor without having its successor in the pipeline. So with SensorExcel about to be launched, Terry and his colleagues had to top their own best efforts. SensorExcel and its predecessor, Sensor, were the most popular razors in Gillette's history, but they retained a twin-blade configuration that the company had been using for twenty years. Gillette scientists wondered if something more dramatic might be possible.

“We knew that if you had more blades you'd be able to cut more hair,” Terry said. “But we found that what you gained in efficiency you lost in comfort, irritating the skin too much in exchange for the closeness. People wouldn't pay for that—too many nicks and cuts. Then, one day in 1991, we were in the lab and Bernie Gilder said, ‘What if we lower the trailing blade?’ ”

Gilder was no whiz kid. He had been with Gillette for decades, and his insight was the product of what Terry calls “tacit knowledge”—knowledge that you acquire only after spending a long time in those linoleum-floored shaving labs. Still, in the incrementalist world of shaving technology his idea counted as a bona-fide apple-on-the-head brainstorm.

Every shaving engineer knew why two blades were better than one. As a razor moves, it makes the skin bulge, forcing hairs up and out of their follicles. The first blade catches the hair, pulls it up, and slices through it, after which the hair starts to retract. Before it can retract fully, though, the second blade catches it and cuts it below where the first blade did. A third blade would do the same, but it would tend to get *too* close. Gilder's insight was that by setting up each of three blades at a different angle—a difference invisible to the naked eye—the third blade would be able to get closer to the skin without tearing at it.

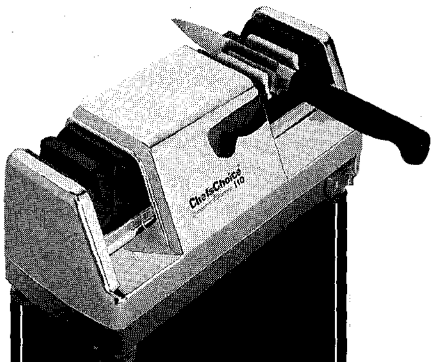
The new three-blade model was code-named Manx (the coat of arms of the Isle of Man has three legs), and when Miles Yeoman ran it through his reflex stereo machine he found that it removed forty per cent more hair than Gillette's best product, the still brand-new SensorExcel. Then the robust friction device proved that the razor was also exerting less drag on the face. In other words, Manx seemed to offer a shave that was both closer and more comfortable, which is the Holy Grail as far as shaving techies are concerned. In its first “out-plant” shaving test, Manx was a huge hit with consumers, too. “So we knew we had a winner,” Terry says, a wide grin creasing his face.

Both Gillette's corporate culture and its marketplace strategy, though, are based on technological supremacy in shaving, and from this perspective Manx had one major shortcoming: its blades, like those of Sensor, were made out of the same material—steel coated with a platinum-chromium alloy—that Gillette had been using since the late nineteen-sixties. Rolling out a new razor with technology that was almost thirty years old hardly accorded with the company's revived ethic of innovation. So, in late 1993, Gillette's C.E.O., Alfred Zeien, laid down the edict: Mach 3 would deploy an entirely new blade technology. It was up to the scientists, of course, to figure out what that might mean.

The problem the Gillette scientists faced was that the thinner the edge is, the more easily it will cut hair, but a thin edge is also more fragile, so you get to the point where running into a hair will actually break the edge off. Coat the blade with a super-hard substance, though, and you can make it sharper.

The scientists had a great candidate—a substance called diamond-like carbon, or DLC. But DLC wouldn't bond with steel, so when you tried to coat a blade with it the stuff simply slipped off. The metallurgists in Boston realized that the trick was to put between the DLC and the steel something that both substances could bond to. Knowing that they had to find that something in time to meet the approaching deadline, they worked weekends and nights, testing every possible candidate until they arrived at a metal called niobium, which bonded nicely with both DLC and steel. Manx now had blades that were two or three times as hard as steel and that cut hair better than anything else in the world.

TECHNOLOGICAL domination, à la Manx, has been the basis of Gillette's success over the last decade, but its value was a lesson hard learned. When Bic introduced disposable razors, in the late seventies, Gillette responded



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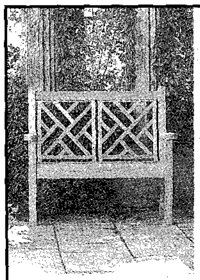

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to the threat by entering the disposables market and swiftly establishing itself as the dominant player. But that wasn't a title the company was proud of. "It was commodity hell," says John Darman, whose official title is head of male shaving for the North Atlantic Group. Darman is a rotund, deeply tanned man with a mustache (a very well-groomed mustache, you can be sure), who bounces happily from topic to topic as we sit at a conference table in the Gillette corporate offices high up in the Prudential Center in Boston's Back Bay. "When you're in the disposables market," he goes on, "you're competing on two things: convenience and price. And that does not play to the strengths of a value-added manufacturer. Disposables were those blue plastic things you threw away. We were teaching our customers to focus on price and to forget about quality."

Darman knew what that was like from his own experience. A native of Cambridge, Massachusetts, who has spent his entire life within a twelve-mile radius, he came to Gillette in the mid-nineteen-seventies, and for his first fourteen years he tried to market the company's "personal care" line, including such hair products as Toni perms, The Dry Look, and Silkience. That was a lesson in what it's like not to be technologically superior to your competitors. "We had no competitive edge, no technological advantage," Darman tells me. "As good a marketer as I am, and as my colleagues are, we were stuck in a positioning-reliant, unpredictable business. It made it easy to understand why you don't want to rely on marketing."

Commodity hell is exactly what American corporations fear most, because when your product is a commodity—essentially interchangeable with all its competitors—the only way to get market share is to cut the price. That means that your profit margin is continually dropping.

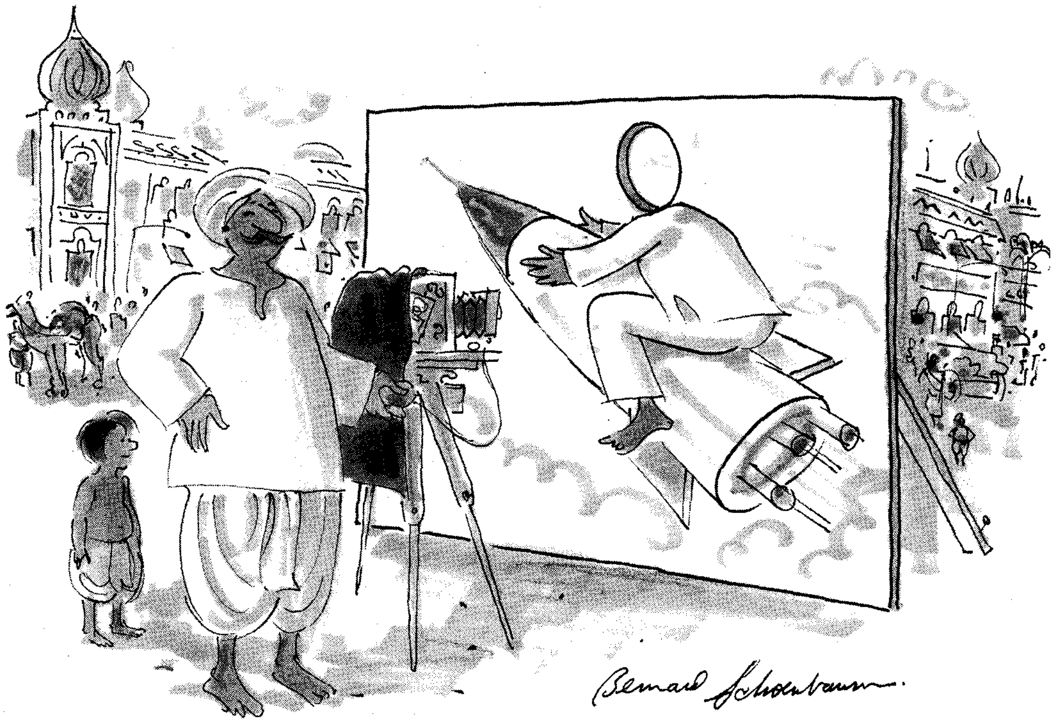
The way most corporations try to avoid commodity hell is through advertising. If you can create a strong enough brand name, the idea is, you can charge more for your product, because people will pay for the brand. And certainly advertising was a crucial part of the turnaround that Gillette embarked on in early 1989, when it abandoned all its advertising for disposables and introduced the "Best a Man Can Get" advertising campaign. But the turnaround ultimately succeeded because the campaign was followed by a product, Sensor, that was strong enough to transform the way people thought about shaving itself.

In the standard narrative of corporate renewal, this kind of turnaround happens when the the board of directors goes outside to bring in a hard-driving C.E.O., preferably with a background in soft drinks and telecommunications, who replaces the deadwood with a fresh corps of mavens from McKinsey. The fact is, though, that the turnaround was orchestrated entirely by Gillette lifers. Gillette's cadre of seasoned engineers has been able to make advances by building on a rich, if undocumented, history of trials and errors; when it became clear that the company had veered off course, its veteran managers knew what would work, because they knew what had worked. The "new" Gillette was the old Gillette.

One of the lifers who put the company back on course was a vaguely Pattonesque man named John Symons, who, as the head of Gillette's North Atlantic Group in the late eighties, embarked on a crusade against the disposables and all they represented. In 1987, arriving at Gillette's Boston headquarters for a divisional review session, he listened patiently while the man in charge of refillables got up and gave a three-hour presentation. Then the man in charge of disposables, Bill Flynn, rose and began to speak. In his hand, he held a bag of ten Good News disposable razors—those blue plastic things—for show-and-tell purposes. He had barely started when Symons took the bag of disposables from him, threw it on the floor, and crushed it beneath his heel. "That is what I think about disposables," he said in his low, gravelly voice. "Your review is not required."

Darman explains, "We wanted to get men back to the way it was before the nineteen-seventies, when they thought of razors as fine instruments. That's why Sensor was so crucial. It was metal, which gave it the fine-instrument feel that we wanted. But it also just gave you a much better shave."

Sensor's superior performance, in turn, was what allowed Gillette to charge more for it than for its predecessor. This gratifying experience was what inspired Al Zeien's decision that Mach 3 would inaugurate a new blade technology. That



decision also fitted into a broader vision laid out by Zeien, a onetime engineer who took over as C.E.O. in 1991 after twenty-two years at Gillette. Zeien identified what he liked to call "growth drivers"—R. & D., capital investment, and advertising—and he committed the company to increasing total spending on them at the same rate that the company's sales were growing. Moreover, Zeien saw to it that Gillette would make products only in categories where Gillette could be the world leader—today 1.2 billion people use Gillette products—and where the market would, in Darman's words, "yield to technology." Under Zeien's tenure, Gillette's market capitalization has risen from six billion dollars to nearly sixty billion. And shaving has become perhaps the only business in the world where the most popular product is also the best: Gillette is simultaneously the Porsche and the General Motors of shaving.

That curious circumstance has essentially given Gillette a license to print money. Last year, it sold 2.9 billion dollars' worth of razors and blades, earning 1.2 billion dollars in profit on them. Its razors are not just more popular than the competition's—Gillette has sixty-six per cent of the male shaving market, and seventy per cent of the female market—but also more expensive.

The great virtue of making top-of-the-line razors, as opposed to top-of-the-line cars, is, after all, that a hefty profit hike for the company—Gillette will charge thirty-five per cent more for Mach 3 than for SensorExcel—doesn't much register with customers. Indeed, in the course of its massive consumer testing of Mach 3, Gillette found that people said, in effect, "Twenty-five per cent, thirty-five per cent—what's the difference? Just give us the razor."

Darman mentions this, then levels his eyes at me as if he were about to divulge the secrets of the temple. "Look, everybody else out there is lower-priced," he says. "We're not doing this out of the goodness of our hearts. We're saying that we'll deliver performance and ask you to pay a higher price." As his pen races across a white notepad, he shows me that since Gillette's newest razor costs more than its predecessors, the company makes an additional profit for every Gillette customer that it can persuade to upgrade. Even more profitable, of course, are converts from disposables or from Gillette's competitors. He glances at the figures on his notepad, and his face opens into a grin. "You know," he says, as if only now making the happy discovery, "this is a very profitable business."

DARMAN'S main role in the development of Mach 3 was the design memo that his department gave Gillette's chief industrial designer, Mike Gray, who has been with the company since the early sixties and still talks about his craft with an air of wonderment. Darman told Gray, who had designed Sensor, that he wanted something masculine, high-tech, and aerodynamic. Gray already knew that, for engineering reasons, the razor had to have a very wide head and a forward pivot. And then he listened to what people who were shaving with early versions of Manx were saying.

"I heard that in some early shaving tests people compared the razor to a paintbrush," Gray tells me. "It was so effortless, they said, that it felt as if you were *painting* your beard off. So I took a paintbrush, and put a razor cartridge in the bristles, and at a meeting I pulled out the paintbrush with the cartridge and showed how as you drew the brush along a surface the cartridge head would swivel and bounce back into position."

It was also clear from the beginning that Mach 3 had to have a distinctive metal finish. To make sure that the plating company they were using got it right, Gray suggested that its engineers go out and rent the movie "Terminator 2," with its computer-generated liquid-metal villain. "Once the guys at the plating company saw the movie, they knew exactly what I was looking for," he says. "It's not chrome. It's almost mercury-like in its finish, and it should seem as if metal had just been poured over it."

The aerodynamic look of the razor does make a happy match with its new name, which was chosen after an elaborate filtering system had pared an original list of several hundred down to four—Triad, Synchro 3, Vector 3, and Mach 3. Besides being consumers' favorite, Mach 3 resonated with all the themes that Darman wanted to

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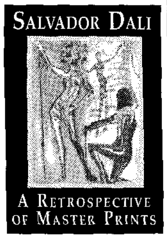

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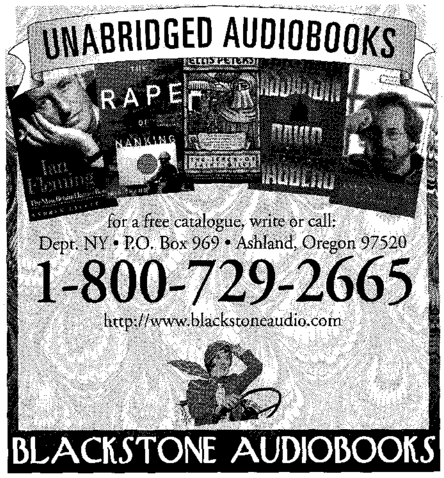

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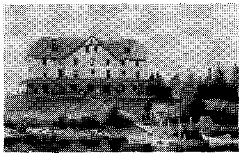

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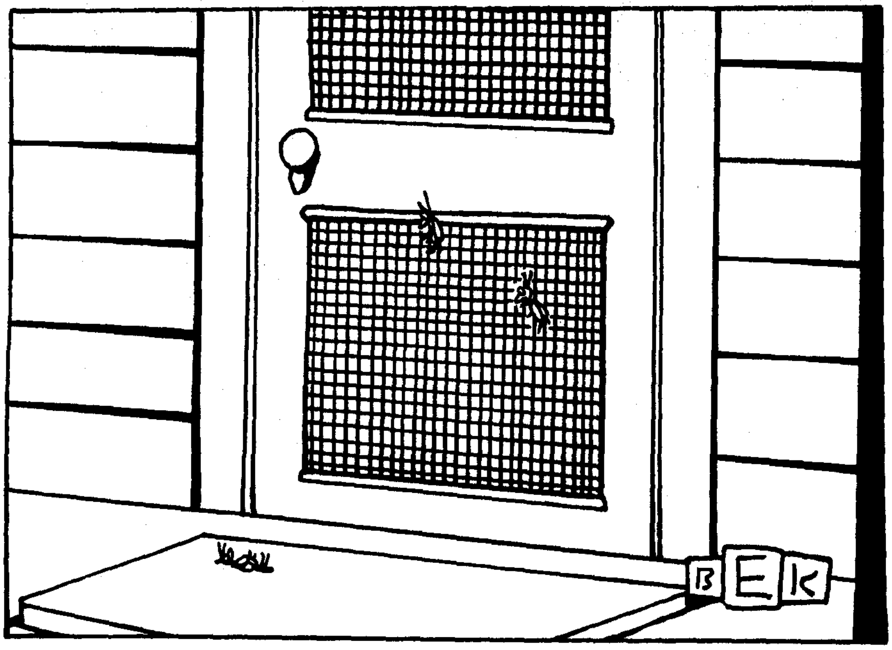


"He will be greatly missed, both on and off the screen."

strike with the product's three-hundred-million-dollar advertising campaign.

Clever names, slick advertising, powerbranding: in today's business world, these are taken to be the only things that really count. "Of all the things that your company owns, brands are far and away the most important and the toughest," the advertising man Jim Mullen claims. "Founders die. Factories burn down. Machinery wears out. Inventories get depleted. Technology becomes obsolete.... Brand loyalty is the only sound foundation on which business leaders can build enduring, profitable growth." That this has become the reigning wisdom of the nineties is evident in Sara Lee's decision, last September, to sell off factories in order to concentrate on "building brands," because, as that company's C.E.O. said, "the investment community does not like asset-intensive companies."

But if branding were everything, companies like Disney and Gillette, with their enormously potent brands, wouldn't have fallen apart in the first half of the eighties. Disney found the way to recovery in its extraordinary animated films (which, in turn, supported an explosion in merchandising) and in the "imagineering" of its theme parks. Gillette's experience, too, demonstrates that Mullen's formulation is backward. To lay the foundation for business growth, it's hard to do better than invest in new technology, build factories, buy new machines. Strong brands are almost always effects, not causes, because sooner or later performance defeats positioning. The strongest companies are still the ones that can figure out how to put that layer of niobium between the steel and the carbon—and to do so at the rate of a billion blades a year.

EXCELLENCE in manufacturing has become the most underrated ingredient in corporate success, and yet nothing distinguishes strong companies from weak ones like the ability to make goods efficiently and reliably. Intel's domination of the semiconductor industry, for instance, was built on the dramatic superiority of its production lines to those of competitors like Advanced Micro Devices. Toyota has carved away market share from American companies because its production system remains the best in the world. And, in shaving, Gillette rules because of decisions like the one it made to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on machines that would allow it to mass-produce Mach 3 in an entirely new way.

As you walk through Gillette's cavernous main factory, in South Boston—it has a giant sign outside that reads, "World Shaving Headquarters," and glows a pleasing blue at night—you have to be careful not to bump into the bright-yellow vehicles, called A.G.V.s, for automatic guided vehicles, that are purposefully moving from machine to machine, picking up magazines full of cartridges or heading back to the warehouse to await further instructions. "It was a big concern of ours, how to prepare our people for the arrival of all this automation," one Gillette manager tells me as we make our way through one of the manufacturing floors. Then, in inadvertent illustration of his point, he happens to bump into a passing A.G.V.; it stops dead and begins to emit a loud, plaintive squeal.

With the sound still ringing in my ears, I go on through the factory, past acres of machines where Sensor, SensorExcel, and Mach 3 are being made. Though the trend in business these days is to outsource as much production as possible, Gillette still makes all its blades and cartridges in-house. Giant coils of steel—each would be twenty miles long unspooled—stand on end. Sensor housings—cartridges that haven't had blades installed in them—are put in bins by machines moving in an oddly halting way, reminiscent of a sewing machine. Occasionally, a white light flashes on a machine, which means that it's signalling to the central dispatcher to send out an A.G.V. for a pickup or delivery.

When Gillette was putting the production lines for Mach 3 in place (they became operational last fall), it built a giant plywood wall to separate them from the rest of the factory; workers on the "plywood ranch" had to sign strict confidentiality agreements. The most dramatic of the new machines is a sixty-foot-long DLC vacuum chamber. Before entering this chamber, fourteen thousand freshly sharpened blades on a giant spindle are given what one Gillette employee called "an atomic-level cleaning" in a Class 5000 clean room, populated by gowned and shower-capped workers. Inside the chamber, a high-voltage charge is sent between a sheet of carbon and the spindle of blades, hurling carbon atoms into the surface of the blades in a process called sputtering. "Our tolerances are on the order of the wavelength of visible light," an engineer says tersely.

The bunny-suited environment around the DLC chamber, though, is unique on the factory floor. For the most part, what is striking about the Mach 3 production lines isn't how high-tech they look but how sturdily functional, and how the machines still seem to belong to the Industrial Age. In Japanese car factories, the floors are clean enough to eat off; here the floors are just—well, fine places to put big, heavy machines on. The most important of these are the whirring, continuous-motion machines that are used to assemble the Mach 3 cartridges. The intermittent-motion Sensor machines stop and start before each task (hence the sewing-machine look); the languidly gliding Mach 3 machines appear to be doing much less work, but they're more than twice as fast. Interestingly, machines, like people, have learning curves, and in the next two years the speed of the continuous-motion machines is going to be steadily ratcheted up until they're turning out two million Mach 3 blades a day.

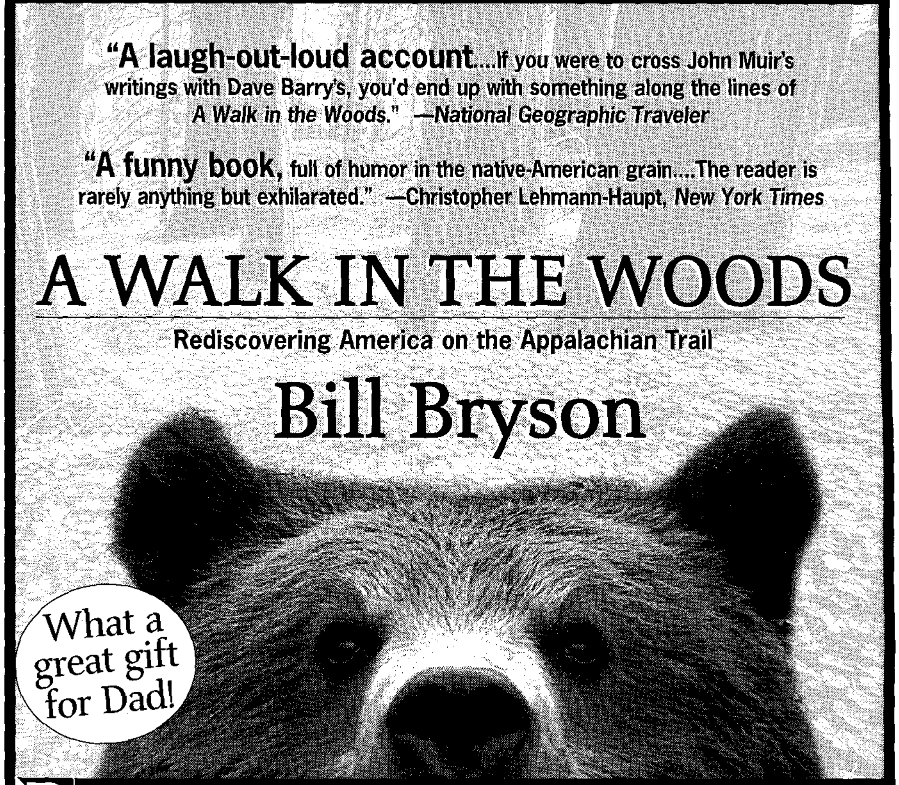
"When you get a new machine, you have to debug it—make little changes here and there," Fred Campatelli, who is in charge of engineering on the factory floor, says. "Then, when you solve those, you take it up another notch in speed and you find a whole new batch of things to fix. But we'll get it up to its top rate soon enough."

Mike Cowhig, the head of manufacturing, who has been standing next to me during this explanation, now leans in and says to me, "Then we're going to ask them to push it past that."

Campatelli looks at him hard, wondering if he's serious.

He is. "I knew you didn't know that," Cowhig tells him breezily.

Standing in the middle of all these brand-new machines, I find it a little unsettling to realize that a few years from now they will be obsolete—or, anyway, not good enough for Gillette's best product—and that soon a new plywood ranch will be constructed. Somewhere in the Reading lab, after all, Mach 3's successor is already in the pipeline. "We'll get a hell of a kick when we see the new razor on the shelves," John Terry told me. "But the truth is that by then we're already preoccupied with what comes next." ◆



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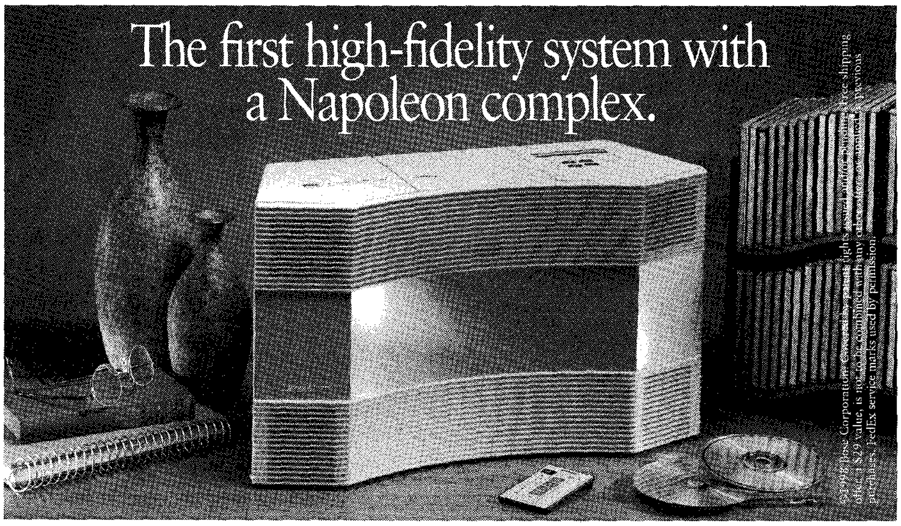

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NURSE WOLF

For a dominatrix who sees herself as a healer, can a dungeon be a clinic?

BY PAUL THEROUX

THE man Nurse Wolf called "the bug cruncher" used to show up at her studio furtively carrying old, cloudy Tupperware containers labelled, with strips of masking tape, "Lasagna April 97" or "Spaghetti Sauce." Never mind the labels; the Tupperware contained insects the man had captured in his yard. He started with beetles, and then he brought roaches and slugs. As time passed, the creatures got bigger. One day, he brought a live mouse.

Nurse Wolf said to him, "I draw the line there. I never said I'd do a mouse."

"Please," the man pleaded. "It's half dead anyway." This was because it had been in a Tupperware container, which had no breathing holes.

"I'm like, 'No way!' " Nurse Wolf told me. But she had agreed to do the others. She had to wear open-toed mules with high heels while the man lay on his side, on the floor—"the bug's-eye view," in Nurse Wolf's phrase—touching himself.

"Stab it with your heel slowly." He wanted her to tease and torment the creatures. Then he would say "Crush it!" and clutch himself.

The bug cruncher's fetish was unusual, even in Nurse Wolf's wide experience. And it was difficult for her to squash insects by aiming a stiletto heel at them—they kept escaping—and the slugs were just impossible.

"I liked the freaky side of it," she said.

When Nurse Wolf told her psychotherapist how, as a dominatrix, she sometimes imagined herself a furry creature with sharp little teeth—"And with a long tail. I have a major tail fetish. I wish I had a tail. I used to wear a tail"—the therapist remained thoughtful.

She said, "That could be penis envy."

"I have a penis!" Nurse Wolf shouted at her, and she began to laugh. "I have lots of them! I have a big purple one with glitter on it. I am not envious."

Some time later, Nurse Wolf said to me, "I love women with tails." She also told me, "I love little, fat Hispanic boys with breasts. I love old men. I love big, fat, soft men. A few of the fattest and oldest men are my babies. I put diapers on them. I like the ones that just lie there and love the smell of talc. I love the rotten ones, too—the ones that are naughty and have to be spanked very hard."

In the world turned upside down, people in search of pain are nearly as common as people seeking relief from it. (For the purposes of this account, I have changed potentially identifying but not substantive characteristics of people and places.) Nurse Wolf was my name for this queen of algolagnia—of pleasure from pain. She gave pleasure by inflicting it, she got pleasure from causing it. In our conversations, she described one of her favorite roles as that of a nurse in a medical scenario, and it suited her perfectly. I could see the white shoes, the nurse's white outfit, the brisk gestures, the busy hands. She was in her early thirties, attractive, the picture of health, still looking like the Texas cheerleader she once was; it was easy to imagine her as an efficient, unflappable nurse. In her studio she had a medical room and a lot of implements: forceps and scalpels and electrical devices. I remarked several times on the expertise suggested by all this equipment, but she dismissed the procedures involved as fairly simple. Her modest dismissal was very nurselike: she would shake her head and say, "It's only home surgery."

She explained, "Typically, I'm an evil nurse. 'This is for your own good,' I might say. 'Mommy wants to take your temperature. This is part of your treatment.' You know, the sound of a latex glove being snapped on is more effective for some people than being probed—especially if they're blindfolded."

The promise of an "authentic medical-exam room" is often made in the advertisements for mistresses in the S & M press. Nurse Wolf's medical room is well fitted out and, except for the presence of handcuffs and whips, closely resembles the examination room of a gynecologist. And there is much more equipment elsewhere in the apartment she calls her studio or, sometimes, "my dungeon." The word "dungeon" seems fairly apt for two of the rooms, given the furnishings: a black coffin, a steel cage, flogging posts and flogging stools, and a rubber body bag winched up so that a man can hang like a bat.

AFTER many lengthy conversations with Nurse Wolf, I seriously wondered whether there was anyone whom she did not welcome to her place. When I asked her, her answer surprised me.

"If someone calls on the phone and says, 'I'm very attractive. I work out all the time and make a lot of money,' I have no interest," Nurse Wolf said. "And younger men are no good. They think they're so handsome. They don't show up on time. They're not respectful. I don't like the young guys at all—

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HELMUT NEWTON

She gave pleasure by inflicting pain, which she enjoyed. She laughed a lot. "Come on over and let's see what we can whip up."

"And try not to spill Daddy's Martini, Caleb."

those 'You're going to tie me up and keep me forever' guys. What I want to hear is 'I haven't had an extensive amount of real experience, but I want to grow in this area, and I fantasize about X, Y, and Z.' Maybe they don't know what it means in their life—that it has a place. I have a lot of great clients."

"What makes a great client?"

"They have a good sense of humor. They respect your time. They like the same things that I do. They trust me. I like grateful and really respectful people. The only downside is that after you beat the hell out of them they call you twenty times afterward to thank you." As for sessions with women, in ten years she has seen only two women on their own, professionally. Her explanation is that women are less inclined to pay for abuse, because they are more likely to experience it in their relationships.

As is true of any treatment center, a person is not accepted as a client without first being screened. Walk-ins are out of the question—no drop-ins, no strangers. One of Nurse Wolf's objections to working in a commercial dungeon—as she did early in her career—is that the clients are often not properly screened. "And, of course, they want you to do volume."

Nurse Wolf knows that when she is alone with her clients anything can happen. Even men whom she thought she knew well have become stalkers or non-stop phone harassers. Last summer, a dominatrix on the Upper West Side was found shot to death in her dungeon. "I am worried about that," Nurse Wolf said. "The clients know where you are and they think they have something on you."

So as Nurse Wolf or, sometimes, Mistress Wolf, or Mommy, she takes precautions. "I have them write letters. They have to draw a portrait of themselves on the outside of the envelope, and the envelope also has to contain a picture of their pet, or someone else's pet. Choosing a pet picture tells me a lot about a person—what they're like, their sense of humor. A lot."

After that, she talks to them on the phone. Some she rejects. "I love the crazies and the psycho people, but they are so unstable," she said. When a chosen client arrives, there's more discussion, perhaps lasting an hour or longer, before the session starts.

"I imagine flogging someone is pretty exhausting, isn't it? How many would you do in a day?"

"Not many. But I might do longer sessions."

"What's a long session?"

"The longest I like to do is ten hours."

Nurse Wolf quickly pointed out that that requires a lot of preparation and a lot of cleaning up afterward. "This business can be profitable. Some people make it very profitable, but I don't like seeing it as strictly business. I know people who have nine-hundred lines and Web sites. They offer videos and phone sessions. But I am not interested in mass-marketing my mistresshood."

Still, she is one of the busiest mistresses in Manhattan. As for her clients, there are all sorts, but there is a certain random synchronicity that develops day by day.

"It goes in waves. I don't know how it happens—it's like being in the subway and everyone's chosen to wear green. One day will be all sissy-maid cross-dressers' slut day. And the next day very heavy-leather."

We met, she and I, as travellers, just by chance, both of us being cagey about what we really did for a living—like a bishop and an actress thrown together on the Amazon. She said she was a therapist, I mumbled something about journalism. Actually, I was working on a novel, and she was travelling with one of her slaves, whom she buggered every morning and beat every night. I was never privileged to observe this unusual spectacle, though—unusual, at least, in the mellow monotony of a jungle setting. She said she travelled extensively, and it had to be true, for she was knowledgeable and confident. But it was only long afterward, when we came clean about how each of us was self-employed ("I have a dungeon," "I'm a novelist"), that she told me how she travels with some clients—prosperous businessmen, heads of companies—and ties them up and whips them, back at the hotel, after all the day's meetings are over. She travelled abroad, and had a bias for Germany and Holland and England. She liked all her clients, but she had a special fondness for the English ones. "They have a cutely developed sense of kink. They love games. They're also very polite—respectful and formal. And they can be real sluts," she said, smiling with genuine approval.

I took to her and she to me. "We both have 'people skills,'" I said.

She laughed at that. She laughed a lot—I liked her cheery mood. "Hey, I'm busy, I've got things to do and people to beat!" she said. Or, "Come on over and let's see what we can whip up."

FOR decades, "massage" and "relaxation therapy" have been euphemisms for masturbation, but alongside such ads in mainstream weekly magazines as "Cute Jewish male, 55, very fit, owns business, seeks full-figured Jewish female 22-35 for travel southern CA coast" there is another sort of classification, which until recently I had found pretty hard to decode: "Role Play." The wording of a typical ad might be "Sultry Diva—Let me train you . . . Now!—Fetish Exploration/Behavior Modification/Nurse Therapy."

Role-playing is one of Nurse Wolf's specialties, and in a profession where talk costs money and the meter is always running she is easygoing and talkative. Her garrulity appealed to me because she was so candid. And her work was not just a job. She was clearly sexually obsessed. Her role-playing was less a living than a way of life that she had been refining almost since puberty. She had grown up in a middle-class home, in a suburb, by a swimming pool, in an indulgent family, and was still in regular touch with her folks. She was educated in private schools; she had gone to a great art college; she was knowledgeable about painting, photography, pop music, and performance art. The world of S & M in New York is related to so much else—the art scene, the music scene, film, and even advertising; Nurse Wolf is on the fringes of all of it, and she gave me the impression that as far as her family is concerned her work, which she never discusses, is largely centered on this scene. She had a wide circle of friends. I found her funny, friendly, and generous. And, as she worked out in a gym most days, she was in superb physical condition: in our usual farewell bear hug she unfailingly left me winded.

By almost any reckoning, she was involved in the darkest pleasures imaginable. She described many of them to me in detail, down to the exhausted howls of pleasure of a manacled and bent-over man, his skin splitting open and blood bursting from it under the crack of a whip. "The chance to probe someone's body," as she put it, gave her intense pleasure. She was fascinated by Japanese rope bondage and esoteric knots, by any variation that fed her sadism. "Very subtle changes make me really happy. I learn so much from every exchange. I get a great rush from bondage I've never done before. Especially when it's done well. Everything working perfectly, all the knots. There's the aesthetic satisfaction. The sadistic pleasure. I like when I have a heavy spanking day. The next morning my hand aches, my arm aches. I love feeling it." But what was the point of all this pain and darkness? Nurse Wolf said, "Hot things to me are not dark." A look of pleasurable anticipation that brought to mind a sharp appetite lit her face whenever an image of submission was suggested. "Girls look great when they're tied up," she said. "Some men bring me girlfriends as a sort of offering." Nurse Wolf is so ambiguous sexually that terms such as "gay" or "straight" do not begin to describe the nuances of her polymorphous perversity, or her quest for erotic variation.

Beyond anything else, I was fascinated by her distinct and detailed memories of her girlhood, her close touch with her sexual memory. To a novelist, access to the past is a kind of magic—all the better when what is revealed is something forbidden or strange.

THE world of Nurse Wolf's work is an actual world, one that is more and more unambiguously referred to in the S & M imagery of fashion ads: the long metal heel of a Gucci shoe ("The Stiletto") pressed onto a man's hairy chest, for example, or a stylish nipple ring in silver advertised for eight hundred and ninety-five dollars. In an ad for Bass Ale, a man is shown licking a woman's patent-leather boot ("In a world of strange tastes, there's always Bass Ale"). "Tongue for Rent" is the copy in an ad for a New York wine merchant, and there is predictably pervy imagery in an ad for Fetish perfume. One can add to these the allegations of the sexual amusements of a well-known sportscaster waiting in white panties and a garter belt for his date, and the news stories of a political adviser in a Washington hotel room who enjoyed (according to the call girl who was with him) crawling around naked on all fours, wearing a dog collar, and barking "Woof-woof!"

The Robert Mapplethorpe photographic exhibition that travelled across America from 1988–90 was a significant event in publicizing the varieties of sexual experience: black-leather bullies, men in chains wearing muzzles and leashes, urophilia, genital mutilation, fisting, clamping, piercing were all lovingly adumbrated, along with the photographer's self-portrait showing him with a bullwhip rammed up his bum. Was this inspirational? Perhaps so. It gave at least one Versace fashion show a style: bondage clothes. And books that would have previously been available only from speciality bookstores are now mass-market items.

Not long ago, I saw a TV comedy, "Just Shoot Me," in which a man named Dennis Finch (played by David Spade) becomes madly attracted to a fashion model and ends up suspended in her bedroom in a cage—an actual cage, a classic piece of S & M apparatus. There is a laugh line about the willowy fashion model as a closet dominatrix, and at several points it becomes clear that Dennis rather likes the experience. That was shown in prime time on NBC on a week night a few days before Christmas.

NURSE WOLF has just such a cage in her dungeon, which is in a fairly old red brick building in a busy neighborhood in Manhattan. It is no more than a numbered door in the middle of a block—the sort of place that is easy to slip into and out of unnoticed.

I smelled burning candles, an aroma of chapels and altars, long before I entered the apartment, which had been turned into a series of small rooms. In one, thirty or more candles were burning. They ranged from tall, dripping tapers to vigil lights flickering in cups of liquid wax, eerily illuminating the place, which would have been eerie even without candle flames. On a suspended steel carrousel was a selection of black leather whips, fifty or more, of all types—from riding crops to the vicious leather whip I recognized as a South African *sjambok*, the very symbol of apartheid. Dangling from other hooks were black leather muzzles, studded black leather masks, bridles and bits, and leather gags. Nurse Wolf sat on the top of a cage, in black leather pants and boots and a white T-shirt. Behind her was a large leather seat, which I took to be a swing.

"What is the purpose of that swing?" I asked.

"Sling," she said, correcting me. "Typically, in gay culture you'd say it was a 'fisting sling.' It supports a very vulnerable bondage position, where you're completely immobilized. The idea is that you sit on the very edge here. Your legs are shackled, and your arms are tied. Then you're completely exposed to whatever happens to you."

"And what might that be?"

"Some people fantasize about being taken with a dildo, or even fisted," she told me. "I don't do fisting anymore. I used to love it. It was like stuffing a turkey. It takes a long time. It can take an hour to open a guy up."

It's important to Nurse Wolf that the person to be treated feels completely helpless. "They get into a state of acceptance much more quickly if they're completely immobilized," she said. "Or they become completely traumatized. It's one or the other."

When I asked, "Do they get more excited the tighter it is?," she said that it was impossible to generalize, and she made a larger, more pedantic point. She was insistent that I refrain from generalizing about any part of what she did. "People are all different," she said. "Respecting limits" and "passing to another level" are both repeated mantras in the world of S & M and role-playing. I misunderstood if I noticed a classical piece of torture apparatus and saw only a person writhing in pain.

I remarked on the whips—their number, their complexity, and their quality, too, for they were well made.

"Is that a mace?" It was a heavy spiked ball attached to a bat by a thick chain. Traditionally a mace was a war club used to smash body armor.

"I haven't used it yet," she said. "Let's see, what else? These are nice. I like these padded muzzles."

The muzzle was another black leather piece, heavily stitched, and equipped with buckles. The strength of the equipment was impressive, but of course this was not merely costume stuff, for a musical of "The Man in the Iron Mask" or "Dracula," or for dressing up for a costume ball; this muzzle would be fastened to a man's face and put to the test.

"This one was made to order, because I wanted it to be able to be tied down. I like to do head bondage. I need stuff that you can attach to other things."

She saw me smiling in bewilderment.

"It's a playground," she said.

There were masks on a shelf above the cage: silly rubber masks, and animal masks, and hoods. One, which even Nurse Wolf agreed was particularly scary, was a hood mask with no eyeholes, with padding at the ears, and with only a small breathing hole at the mouth.

"It's got headphones in here at the ears, so the client is completely disoriented. It's scary. You can try it on if you want. It's really claustrophobic."

I said no. I changed the subject to a huge steel coffin that stood upright, dominating the rear of the room.

"A friend of mine is a sculptor," Nurse Wolf said. "He made it for me. I watched a lot of Hammer horror movies when I was a kid, so this is totally my fetish, you know? I use it very infrequently here, unless I'm playing with someone who's really crazy about it."

"Have you been in it?"

"Yes. I like it. Get into it, so that you can hear what it sounds like."

I got into the coffin. Nurse Wolf closed the lid. I felt the sensation of being buried alive—squeezed and suffocated and plunged into a soundless blackness. I felt for a way of freeing myself but touched only a series of hooks around the edge, which were for restraining the coffin occupant.

"Isn't that coffin amazing?" Nurse Wolf said through a small cut-out cross in the lid.

ANOTHER day, feeling that I knew only her professional life, I asked her to reconstruct the previous twenty-four hours. I was interested in what a typical day might be, including free time and domestic activity.

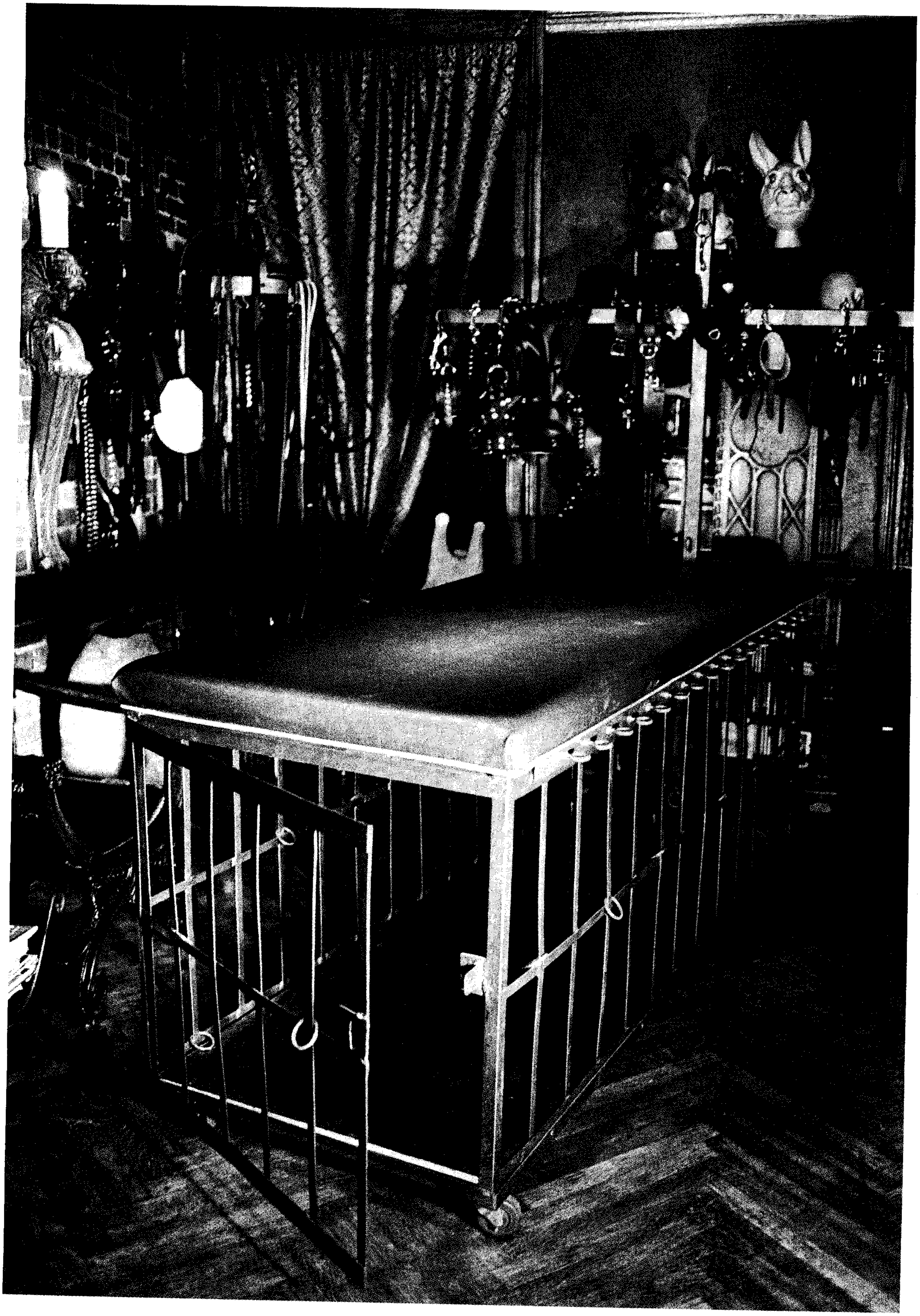
The previous day had been Sunday. Sundays in the straight world tend to be different from weekdays, but her Sunday—this one, at any rate—was an average day, except that she had had trouble with her car.

The day had started all right. "I woke up at seven or eight and made seared tuna with this wasabi-soy marinade. I have fish every morning for breakfast. Then I left at about twelve and helped my boyfriend with his computer for a little while.

"I had a session around one," she said. "I was a little late. He drove in—it takes an hour or so. When he saw I hadn't arrived, he called me on my cellular phone. I told him to go buy some seltzer water. They're always happier if they have some little task to perform. Then he arrives, and says, 'Nice pants.' They were new, beautiful leather pants. I decided to be nice to him. We talked for a little while. Then I started to torment him. I tied him up—face up. Very few are face down. If they're face up there's more to play with."

She sighed, and said, "I decided to try something new." I sensed a certain regret. "I thought it would be great, but no—it was a mistake. I had to fuck with the perfect mixture. I could have just let him suck my dirty toes. If I had just come from the gym, I could have let him lick my armpits. But I had forgotten that he didn't like cross-dressing. I dressed him in a French maid's outfit and made him insert a tampon in his ass, but it wouldn't go in. After

A typical day for Nurse Wolf: fish for breakfast, a few sessions involving muzzles and a maid's outfit, then a quiet dinner with friends.



the session, he says, 'It's really uncomfortable. It's really weird. Maybe it's the way I'm built.' "

The man left, unsatisfied, perhaps disturbed—emotions that Nurse Wolf shared, for she had hoped to bring him to another level but had failed. As though jinxed, she left her dungeon and had trouble with her car. The key wouldn't turn in the door lock. "He couldn't get the tampon in his ass, I couldn't get the key into the lock. I didn't push any of the right buttons! It's Sunday—no mechanic. I went to K mart for some WD-40."

I tried to imagine Nurse Wolf shopping in big biker boots with her big leather backpack on Aisle 9 ("Automotive")—*"Attention, K mart shoppers!"*—looking for heavy-duty motor lubricants. But there were probably others dressed just like her on this New York Sunday.

The WD-40 didn't work. She fussed with the car lock for a while, and around six she went back to the dungeon to change for dinner. She then got a call from a mistress friend, Dale, inviting her over to her place to drop in on a session in progress. "I've got a dinner engagement. I can give you forty minutes," Nurse Wolf said.

The client turned out to be a mystery. Neither Dale nor Nurse Wolf had ever seen his face.

"He always comes in in a business suit, wearing a latex cat suit under it, and that includes a mask," she told me. "It's custom-made. He wears dark glasses, too. From the look of his body, he's in his mid- to late thirties. He's in good shape. It makes me think that he might be famous or recognizable. You never know. He might just be paranoid."

I said, "If Dale doesn't know his name, what does she call him?"

" 'Slave,' 'Cocksucker.' She calls him a lot of things."

It was early evening—seven o'clock—by the time Nurse Wolf had dressed and put on her makeup. She went in wearing what the man had requested—a cat suit and thigh-high boots. The man's head and feet were tied down, but his hands and arms were free.

Dale was sitting on a throne behind his head, with her feet on his chest.

Nurse Wolf said, "Why are this pathetic creature's hands not tied?"

"Oh, because even though he's doing a horrible job I'm trying to teach him to worship my legs."

"Isn't this a waste of your valuable time?"

"I don't know why I bother!" Then Dale said to the man, "You don't know how lucky you are. I can't believe she'd be interested in seeing someone like you—she is Mistress Wolf. And you can't even massage my feet well."

"Does he do anything right?" Nurse Wolf asked.

"Hardly," Dale said, stepping on the man's face.

The two women started to laugh. The man grunted almost inaudibly. His hands were free but his penis and testicles were tied with surgical tubing to his toes. The exciting part of a session, Nurse Wolf said, is not knowing quite where it's leading—extemporizing, in the manner of Method actors preparing a scene.

Dale said, "I think I have to pee."

Nurse Wolf said, "I *really* have to go, so I'll do that part if you want—but I don't want him to see."

The man was berated into putting his hands over the holes in his hood while Nurse Wolf squatted and urinated on Dale's toes. "I'd never done that before. It was so great. I loved it. I could care less about men. This is so much not for men." Dale put her feet in his mouth and demanded that he suck her toes. The man hesitated and seemed to panic.

"I'm afraid I'll do it wrong," he wailed.

"Like everything else you do," Dale said, and the women laughed again. "What a wuss you are!"

I asked Nurse Wolf whether he had liked his session.

"They always do when you're enjoying yourself," she said.

She did not speculate on who he might be. She did not ask. It's important in such a business for people to be comfortable and—paradoxically, given the fact that they are flogged unmercifully—to feel safe.

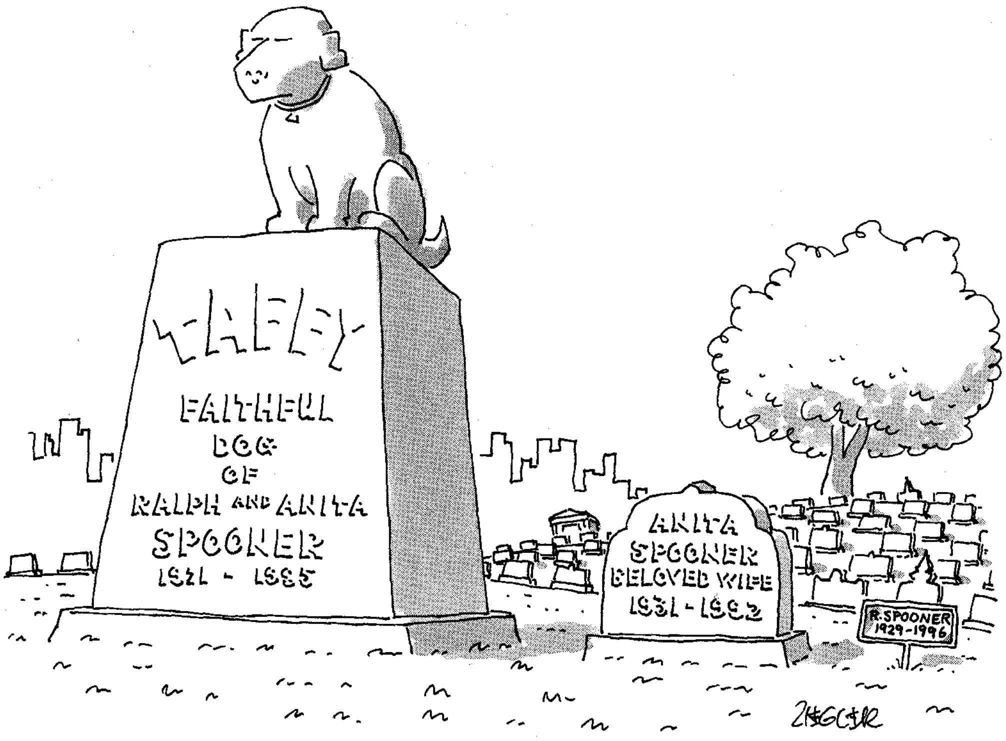
The session ended. Nurse Wolf changed her clothes again, and left to meet her boyfriend. They went out to eat at a good restaurant with another couple and enjoyed an

"Thanks, Mom. Thanks, Kevin. I had a very nice time."

excellent meal. All in all, Nurse Wolf thought, not a bad day.

"I DIDN'T start out wanting to be a professional mistress at all," Nurse Wolf said. It had started purely as play, in her prep school. In the seventh grade, at age thirteen, she became a cheerleader for the school team. Homecoming, she said, was a big Texas thing, lasting a whole week, and one of the festivities was a Slave Auction, organized for a charity.

"It was flattering to be bought, and it was also a horrible thing," Nurse Wolf said. "I bought Kent Sanford. I'd had a crush on him for years. Finally, I bought him, and he was mine. I dressed him in my cheerleading outfit, with full makeup, and that's how it all started."


LADY
FAITHFUL DOG OF RALPH AND ANITA SPOONER
ANITA SPOONER BELOVED WIFE
R. SPOONER 1929-1996

Kent loved it. He was transformed: he fell utterly for Nurse Wolf. The next year, the television series "Roots" came out. The dynamics of the master-slave relationship and the details of domination and submission—the whips, the handcuffs, the shouted orders, the pleading—had a profound effect on her. She saw every episode.

Her choice of college was fairly easy. She liked art and design. She was a serious student, but she was simultaneously broadening her interests in S & M. She had friends at nearby colleges. "I used to play with them, and I sketched their heavy scenes. They were into a lot of blood play."

After graduation, in the mid-eighties, she came to New York. The S & M scene was less open; people met at parties—"play parties." "I dressed. I was a sadist. But you don't learn the skills overnight." The play was rarely private. Nurse Wolf was observed and admired; she was invited to work at various dungeons. She says that fifteen years ago there were far fewer establishments in New York than there are now. Even she is astonished by how popular such activity is, how accessible, how much of its imagery is in the mainstream. Still, she was less surprised by the clients than by the mistresses in the houses. "Some of those people I wouldn't let out on the street," she told me. "The mistresses were psychotic. And I had more equipment at home than they had in their studios. They'd have a piece of rope and a Ping-Pong paddle. I had beautiful custom-made leather whips."

She had to lay down ground rules: No "toilet service." (A client had once stuck her head in a toilet. "I had no idea that I was expected to be a slave at times. I had limits.") No foul-name calling.

Some men want everything to be kosher, she told me. " 'Is everything safe? Is everything clean?' Then it's 'Can you beat me on the hands and tell me I'm bad?' Some guys are really into the visual, so it's 'Take your blouse off.' There's no way I would do that. I am not going to undress for them."

Nurse Wolf prefers improvisation and collaboration. "I like to have the power to ask anybody anything and have them be really nervous and excited," she said. But one day when she was at the house she was asked to "enact a Nazi interrogation" with a Jewish client—something, she said, that she would never initiate on her own. "It's unspeakable. I wouldn't feel good about it." The client hadn't washed, and he smelled terrible. His requests were precise, and he provoked her to real fury. She was to question him, slap him, abuse him verbally. She had been warned about this man and had been told his name, but she was too new to the business to know that clients visiting houses had many aliases. This proved to be an unstable man. "He wanted me to dress in a Nazi uniform, shiny boots, shiny visor on my cap, leather gloves. It was awful. He was tied up, but his head wasn't tied up. He slipped his tongue into my mouth and I slapped him." She was angry and disgusted: a line had been crossed. She hurried away and gargled with peroxide. Afterward, the man took a shower. "That pissed me off. Not before but after he had been with me. See?"

In all her stories of whippings and cutting and broken canes and blood, I heard her tell of few things that had offended her more than that unwelcome kiss. Speaking of the risks in her work, she told me about it more than once, always in tones of amazement and disgust.

"So there are some things that repel you?"

"Yes. But mainly I don't want to be told what to do."

The technical terms for what she objects to are SAM, or Smart-Ass Mas-

"Never forget, Bobby, how many brave men fought and died so that we might have a free market."

ochists, and "Topping from the Bottom"—a slave giving orders. Nurse Wolf describes it as back-seat driving, and she hates it.

OFF and on, Nurse Wolf worked in other people's dungeons for five years. She considers it her internship. "I didn't want to be chosen from a book. I can't remember how I got out of it. I block out stuff. One time I had a handprint on my face. I ended a great relationship over that." But those years allowed her to accumulate some savings, and she used them to set up on her own.

To someone unfamiliar with the world of S & M it may seem odd that a plumber or an electrician will arrange a sort of barter in return for his work, but this does sometimes happen. The subject came up when I speculated about the wealth of her clients. Most were powerful men, but some had very little money or had been laid off, and some people saved up for a long time to pay for a session. Nurse Wolf isn't unusual in finding mechanics or housekeepers who will work for a whipping. In the domination newspapers *S & M News*, *Dominant View*, and *Dominant Mystique*, there are often classified ads like the following: "YOUNG, ATTRACTIVE & VERY EXPERIENCED DOMINANT FEMALE WITH COMPLETE DUNGEON seeks dedicated submissive male carpenter to make fairly sophisticated dungeon furniture and do alterations to my home in exchange for time spent as your personal temptress, torturer, and object of all your submission."

Clients from the houses followed Nurse Wolf to her studio the way people stay faithful to a haircutter who moves to another salon. Some of her clients have been seeing her for eight or nine years, and others she has known even longer. "I've had longstanding relationships with people before they've met their wives, before they've had kids. Their kids are now growing up."

Nurse Wolf enjoys working with clients who have very intricate fantasies, which become more complex over time, such as those of a man whose role-playing takes place entirely in an office, undoubtedly based on his own. "He is the only man who's left in this all-woman company," Nurse Wolf explained. "He has done something wrong. He's wrongfully accused of sneaking a glance at a woman. He's presented with an ultimatum about losing his job, not for making an obscene gesture but just for this glance. It's dress-down day. A complaint is filed. It's all women. They say, 'No man should be allowed to do this.' He has a choice—get fired and lose all his benefits and money and everything or agree to be a slave."

"And you beat him?"

"No. He's not tied up. We sit here talking. He's forced to make a decision about being completely destitute or living naked in a cage in the office. The cage has a little, upended bottle that he drinks out of, like a hamster would. He's been told that our toilets feed into that. I know he would lick my toilet if I suggested it, but I don't want him to. I don't want people to lick the bottom of my shoes. I know they would. But I don't want them to get some wacky disease."

THE clients she calls her babies are among her most devoted. In talking to me about baby culture, the role-playing called infantilism, Nurse Wolf became almost sentimental. In her smirking, sadistic heart, there is something strongly maternal. It's reflected in her passion for control, her love of detail, and her particular liking for passive clients—she says she has an amputee fixation—and for unexpected mischief. Babies satisfy her on many levels.

She used to have a playpen—a big one, with steel bars. She even had a baby—Bunny, a grown woman ("She'd scare a real baby terribly") who played at infantilism. "Bunny and I met at a photo shoot," she told me. "She wanted a full-time mommy and I wanted a full-time baby. She was a rotten baby. She got spanked a lot. I didn't have to change her diapers—she wasn't into that. She did things in order to be punished. Which I like. I like that kind of rotten baby."

Babies are more specific about wardrobe than any other role-playing clients. Nurse Wolf wears a French-maid uniform or a pink-satin mommy outfit. "I'm a cartoon mommy, with big, high shoes and stockings, and lips like this," she said, pursing her lips and making a fish mouth.

Some babies say, "I want to go on an adventure!" Nurse Wolf, ever obliging, takes them on an adventure. They wear diapers and plastic pants under their clothes, making crinkling sounds as they walk. "I take this one old baby out with one of my girlfriends. She's a great, great mistress," she told me. "She's wicked. She's totally hot. We're in a bar, and I say to the baby, 'You stand over there,' and we make out—this is in a bar around the corner—and then she torments him, blows smoke in his face. The baby poops in his pants. We make him play pool, or stand up and sit down really hard."

Of all her clients—leather fetishists, flagellomaniacs, blood players, masochists, slaves, sensory-deprivation junkies, and perhaps even bug crunchers—the babies are the least predictable. Some love the experience of being diapered, others crave bottle feeding, and you never know what they'll want in their bottle—beer, chocolate milk, Coke, whatever. Sensual babies want to feel safe. Naughty babies try to get under Nurse Wolf's skirt and have to be restrained.

Two generalizations are possible. Baby clients are always shaved. Also, they often love shoes, and have foot and leg fixations. Nurse Wolf's explanation—incidentally, it is also Krafft-Ebing's, in his 1886 classic, "Psychopathia Sexualis"—is that long ago, when these big men were tiny and impressionable, that was the angle from which they were looking up at a real mommy.

I asked whether babies—or any of these people—had orgasms. After all, wasn't that the point?

"No," Nurse Wolf said. "I see a lot of people who are denied that. That's part of the treatment. They're sent out without any release."

As for the babies, in their own worlds they are often power brokers. With Nurse Wolf, they need to submit—to be caned, to be mommied. "It's a vacation for them to be controlled, to be told what to do, to give pleasure to someone else," she said. Pleasure for one captain of industry involves crouching in a dog collar and pink panties and painting Nurse Wolf's toenails.

In Nurse Wolf's studio, there is no censor, no political correctness. No ethnic group is excluded—or spared, depending on your point of view. Perhaps predictably, some of the darkest fantasy scenarios are induced by racial history. It is not for Nurse Wolf to condemn; on the contrary, one of the paradoxes of her sadism is that she is obliged to become a willing partner. Many of the fantasies are imposed on her.

She met a black man at an S & M party some years ago. A friend of hers had said, "I want you to meet my slave." The man was tied up and verbally abused ("You little nigger") while having cigarette ashes flicked at his head. "He was totally into it," she said.

"Doesn't this go against everything you believe?" I asked.

"If you know where something's coming from, and you both enter into a situation where you can explore things that are really dark, it's more pure in a way. I had to ascertain really quickly: Is this guy sound of mind? Is this going to destroy him? When I make that determination, it's by mutual agreement."

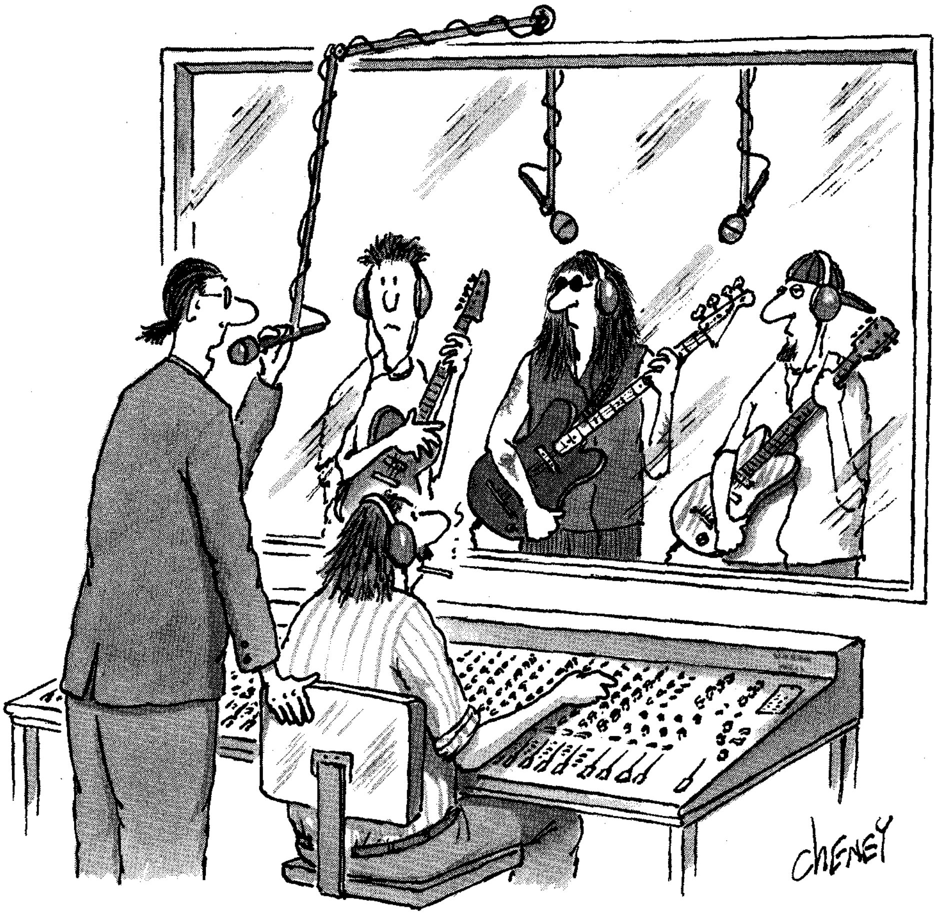
The man at the party was naked, lying face down on a table and tied down at four points—spread-eagled.

"I leaned over and whispered, 'I saw you looking at her milky-white breasts. What were you thinking about?' "

She and her friend took turns beating him.

"We had a great experience," Nurse Wolf said, "but I crossed a real line for myself. I was saying, 'You wanna go here? Then go here—and it might be a lot further than you anticipated.' I couldn't say to this guy, 'Have a positive feeling about yourself.' "

When she told me she was especially fond of her Japanese clients, I told her about "Pink Samurai," a detailed book about eroticism in Japanese life, which includes slave-girl fan-



"Not bad, fellas. Let's do one more take, with more emphasis on tone, harmony, melody, rhythm, composition, lyrics, musicianship, tempo, and originality."

tasies involving torture and schoolgirl fantasies in which soiled panties figure. (Selling panties is a lucrative sideline for some entrepreneurial Japanese schoolgirls.) As for the defecation fantasies explicit in the book, Nurse Wolf said that her Japanese clients had never expressed any interest in them but that she herself had wanted to see what it was all about. A woman came in and conducted a few sessions, but Nurse Wolf was revolted by it. As she told me the story, her face was fixed in a look of utter disgust.

"I have a couple of great Japanese clients," she said. "My Japanese are totally into being punished. Japanese rope bondage is really beautiful. Each rope has a purpose. It's creative—it's really satisfying. Sometimes, just to learn, I've switched roles. It's great. But I want to be doted on, I want to be dominant."

NOT all the clients who visit her come alone. "How do I get my wife interested in this?" is a common question that Nurse Wolf has to answer. She urges the client to bring the woman in—wife or girlfriend. She told me that she dominates the man while the woman watches, and that the woman often becomes excited watching the man being forcibly cross-dressed, or expertly humiliated, or whipped. Nurse Wolf sometimes makes the man serve the wife or lover: she ties the man up in head bondage between the woman's legs and forces him to be her sex slave. "I enjoy making the woman have as much fun as she can. So whatever she's into." Some women become obsessed and end up caning their men with startling gusto.

A loved one's connivance is a boon. Most of her clients are forced to be covert, and it poses a problem if a man wishes his taste for pain to be hidden from his wife or girlfriend.

"One man had to go home with a perfect handprint on his face," she told me. "He had to come up with a mugging story. And rope burns on the wrist, or mask lines, are another complication—someone sweating in a black leather mask has stains on his face. A whip is likely to wrap around the thigh and cause obvious bruising."

Several couples have requested branding. She branded a man on his buttocks, scarring him for life. Another man was branded with his wife's name. She also described using an electric nerve stimulator with accessories, one of which was a catheter. Such equipment is offered for sale in S & M magazines: a Master High Frequency Unit with a selection of electrodes, which sells for a hundred and eighty-nine dollars, or "authentic" prison wrist shackles and leg irons and "enema and colonic supplies."

"An electrified catheter, of course, has got to be sanitary," she said. "Got to swab carefully! The catheters come in different thicknesses. I insert one and switch on the electricity."

Cutting is "blood play." "I do a fair amount of cutting and sewing," Nurse Wolf said. One novelty was her sewing a man's foreskin together at the end and then sewing a button to it. The man loved it. She was amazed by the pain levels he could endure. He went out to dinner afterward with a woman friend. ("Not a hooker—I can tell.") The woman was part of the arrangement. She brought snippers along, and later in the evening she cut the sutures.

Hearing this, I winced and said, "Isn't it dangerous? Any of these things could hurt someone. I mean, you can die."

Nurse Wolf covered her face. "Please don't say that. Touch something! I don't want that negative stuff around here. I've had virtual nine-one-one experiences. Really scary. And I do a lot of really heavy things. I mean, if someone's hooked up to an electrical device or hanging by his ankles and he passes out, that's a big responsibility."

Now and then a man asks for something he cannot handle. "One guy is into very heavy bondage. I call it 'cause-and-effect bondage.' If he moves one way it hurts—for example, when they're attached a pierced nipple will move on a pierced testicle if he's squirming from being caned on the ass. He is always affecting his own pain level. He's also into sensory deprivation, so the combination of these things that he can't physically handle means that he's going to lose it sometime. If he's not breathing properly in this state, he's not going to be able to say, 'I think I'm going to pass out.'"

"What does he say?"

"If something isn't working, I have him say, 'This isn't working.' But I don't want them to control the session, with directions like 'Code Red' or 'Mercy,' because that way they're in control. I don't want to waste my time. 'A light whipping, please.' Forget it. I'm old and jaded. I think, What's that? You can't take that? I was in one session with a guy, and I said, 'Look at you! You said you'd do anything for me! And you can't take it!' A friend was there, sitting in. I said to her, 'Beat me. Use that on me.' I changed places. I wanted to prove to him what a wuss he was. I was like, 'I don't like this. I don't even do this, and I can take more than you!'"

She is looking for a man who can take anything, she told me. With a successful businessman and obsessive masochist, it was almost love. "I pushed him to another level, and then I couldn't handle it. It was the pain. I don't think he had ever been beaten as hard as I was beating him." He kept asking for more. "And then he was craving it. And because I was attracted to him, I was beating him harder each time. Usually on the ass. After a caning I don't think he could undress in front of his wife for weeks. I would break canes on him."

The man ceased to be a client, left his wife, became Nurse Wolf's lover—well, a sort of lover: her utter slave. But after a while, his almost limitless capacity for degradation became such a burden it was as though she were *his* servant, and at last he exhausted her patience. "I don't think I'd ever do anything like that again. It was awful."

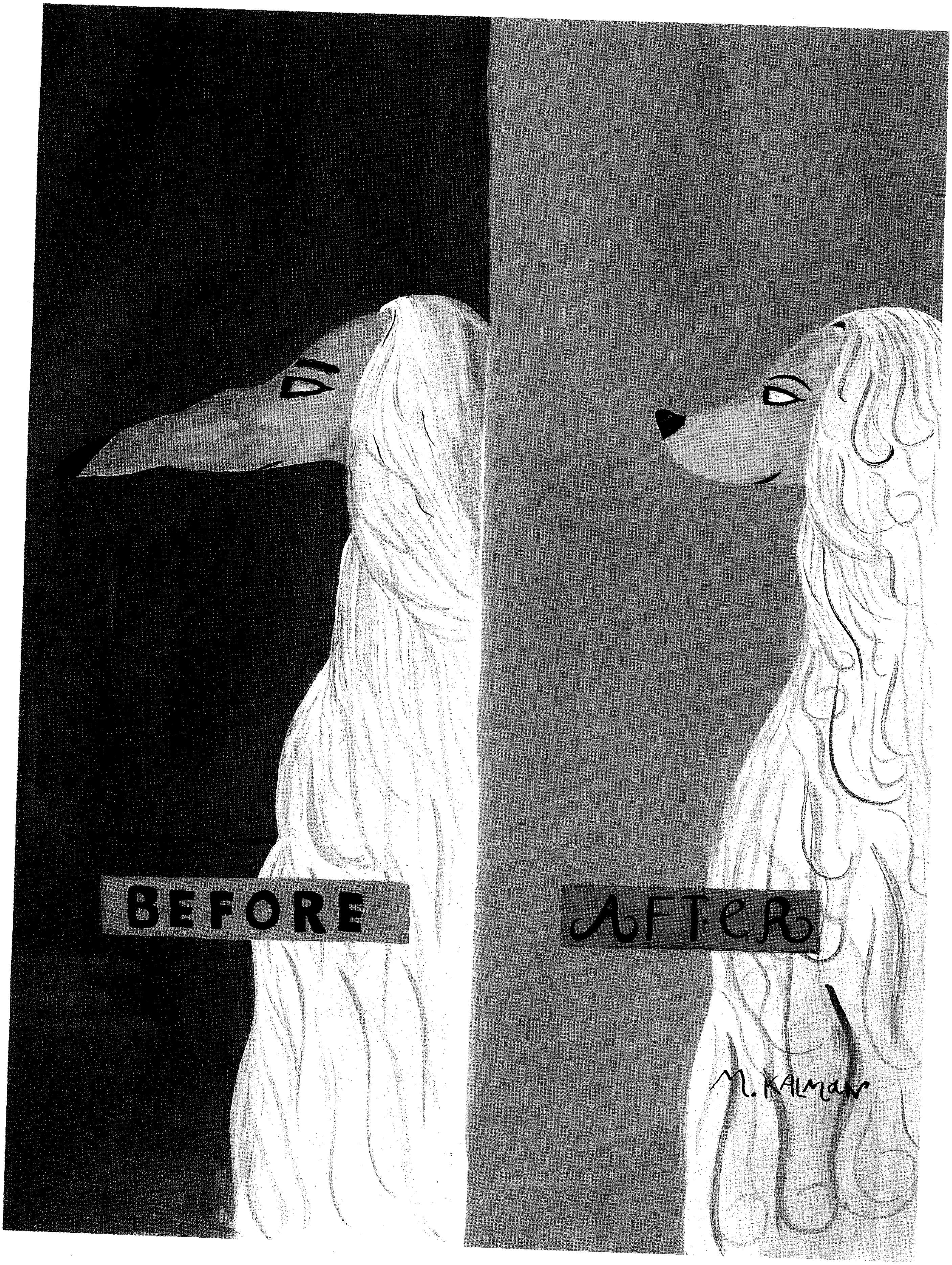
A serious problem arose with a man who wanted to be wrestled into submission. Nurse Wolf, who is game for most anything, teamed up with an attractive and well-built woman wrestler who has a select and devoted clientele. (She flies around the country for private sessions, held mostly in hotel rooms.) This particular man had flown into New York and had arranged to meet them at a hotel downtown. It was a near-disaster.

"He was small—about a hundred and sixty. My friend could bench-press him. She could hold him over her head. I was doing head scissors on this guy. I'm squeezing his carotid artery, and he passes out and gets a spasm."

Meanwhile, her friend was saying, "He's fine, keep going!"

"His head is between my thighs, and he's spasming. I let him go and

SKETCHBOOK BY MAIRA KALMAN


BEFORE
AFTER
M. KALMAN

he dropped. I was scared that he was dead. Then she slaps him really hard and does C.P.R. on him. And he comes back."

The man was groggy and disoriented from having fainted, but when he realized where he was he said, "O.K., let's go." He wanted more.

"I couldn't believe it. I ended up putting my gloves on and beating the fuck out of him. 'I hate you for almost dying!' I don't think he was happy with his black eye. His nose was bleeding. His lip was split. His nose was across his face. I loved it. Afterward, I made him take us out for sushi."

One day, we were in the restaurant of the Mark Hotel, having lunch and laughing over a menu item described as "weakfish." Nurse Wolf was saying she certainly didn't want that. She was dressed in her working clothes—a short leather skirt, a pretty blouse, Doc Martens, and a heavy chain around her neck—and there were stylish young women in the place who were dressed similarly, for this was the fashion, but probably those other women were not going to spend the afternoon dressing a banker as a sissy maid and breaking canes on an executive's buttocks: two sessions on Nurse Wolf's agenda. In giggling about weakfish, Nurse Wolf used the expression "real sex."

I asked her to explain.

"Mutual reciprocity—real fucking. I love that, too. I also like playing. I like slaves. I recommend both—real sex and role play. But in my dungeon real sex is forbidden."

It occurred to me to ask whether these men ever begged to make love to her, just jolly, jig-jig, cork-in-a-bottle-style sex.

She was shocked. "They wouldn't dare. Are you kidding?" She made a fierce face at me. "They'd be dead. That's a line they'd never cross."

"Still, your boyfriend knows about this. And it must be difficult to go from this—a man being bound up and humiliated—to meet your boyfriend, have a drink, and so forth. Then go to bed? Is that transition difficult?"

"It depends on the day. Mostly, it's a problem because of the phone ringing off the hook—people being very needy. I had to take the cell phone to bed one time, because I was expecting a call, and that was a big problem with my boyfriend. I have always done whatever I wanted to do. That was the first time I realized I had to be considerate of someone."

Her boyfriend once got turned off because after they'd spent a nice day together she had to go to the studio for a session. He said, "You're going to work." She knows he used that word because her word for it is play.

Boyfriends come and go, but the other men have remained loyal through the years.

"Do you see yourself doing more of this, or less?" I asked her.

"I can't do this forever. I get even more selective, more specific about what I want to do and what I don't want to do. There are people who call, and I say, 'I think you're a great person, but I just can't do this session.' This year, I have been cleaning house."

In some ways, words hold much more power for Nurse Wolf—and for some of her clients—than any whip. She has her Scheherazade stories. The most extreme examples involve some of her longest-term clients—those whom she calls "cannibals." One is a man with a Hansel-and-Gretel fantasy. With Nurse Wolf's assistance, he fantasizes about being a little boy and being cooked alive in a big pot. His fantasy is full of folktale ornamentation: the shadowy cottage, the dark woods, the witch's kitchen. At a certain point, the man is eaten, and the prospect of being chewed arouses him sexually.

Another man sees her to relate stories of cannibalism that would not be out of place in the later, weirder episodes of "The Arabian Nights." Nurse Wolf and he are in charge of a tropical island. Young women are abducted and taken there to be fed, fattened, and prepared for a luaù.

"Is it a particular type of woman he's after?" I asked.

"He's very specific. They have to be between eighteen and twenty. They have to have a good shape. One day, he brought a tape measure, and he measured my arm and said, 'Like this.' "

Sometimes that cannibal brings books to the session, with titles like "Aladdin's Slave Farm," about girls who are kidnapped by cannibals. The preparation of the meal is more important to him than the eating. "We trick them," Nurse Wolf says. "They think they're going to be sex slaves. They are very carefully groomed. They are kept in cells

"No one ever went broke making a profit."

and are not allowed to speak to each other. They are punished daily. They are completely broken down and made to be submissive, and then when they're prepared we go into a detailed plan about the arrival of the guests—about how many we're going to have, and what we're going to serve at the luau—the arrival, and the roasting of the girls. And then they'll baste them—all our guests will baste the girls. I mean, these people at the luau are spending a lot of money, right?"

Now and then, in role-playing, Nurse Wolf lets that cannibal bite her. "He's got Parkinson's disease and his teeth are shaking. He bites my arm. He bites my biceps. But he doesn't break the skin. I am in charge."

"Is there anything in it for you?"

"I am bringing something I like to it. You've got to realize my 'freak factor.' I'm exhilarated. He's out of this snowy-haired polyknit, Poligrip ad, and instead of playing tennis with his wife, he's biting me and having cannibal fantasies. Biting me! My arm! I think about it and I snicker. I try to block the ugliness of it." This Cannibal Island story has gone on for eight years. Were it printed it would fill many volumes. "I'm crazy about him. I adore him, but it's a lot of work. I can't just go through the motions. I have to be there and not anywhere else. It totally drains me. It's the reality of it. That I am helping him in his fantasy. But it's so dark I get sucked dry."

It's possible to view this role-playing as the apotheosis of the dominatrix as nurse. Oliver Sacks, who has studied Parkinsonian patients, has said that a person who is suffering the mental or physical rigidity associated with the disease often finds release in closely observing another person. The symptoms of Parkinson's may be alleviated by "borrowing" language and gestures from someone else. Although Nurse Wolf has no idea about the studies supporting this theory, she may very well be helping the Parkinsonian cannibal to function. The way I saw it, the cannibal, by indulging in these serial fantasies, was perhaps prevented from going out and killing and eating a woman.

"I've decided to replace the sod floor with tile."

• •

Nurse Wolf was not sure about any of this. "I always think, One step beyond biting is eating."

"Why do you let him bite you?" I asked.

"I think it's the mommy in me!" She laughed, but after that outburst she grew gloomy and said, "I am constantly told that I don't see a good representative cross-section of men. 'You are not in the normal world, where you can make judgments on things, or make generalizations.' "

It seemed to me, though, that the opposite was true. She understood what many men—many more than one would suppose—were truly like. Of course, it would be the covert and the rejected who sought her out—no one else would see them. You might immediately think of a long queue of jostling grotesques and twisted old fruits from George Grosz or Francis Bacon. But no. Lined up as they'd been described to me, they were people who were instantly familiar—the electrician, the insurance executive, the stockbroker, the editor, the writer. The man in the hood was masked precisely because anyone might recognize him.

We don't know everything about them, but Nurse Wolf does. Enigmatic to their wives and girlfriends, hearty and humorous to their children and grandchildren, it's exclusively to her that they divulge their secrets.

"One of my slaves was terminally ill," she said to me one day. "He told me almost a year before he told his family. So he and I had this secret. I was the only person who knew."

She went on beating him. He was one of the men who liked "heavy corporal." He kept seeing Nurse Wolf, in order to be beaten, right up to the month before he died. She told me how much it had meant to her to know his secret. She grew fond of seeing him; she looked forward to whipping him. She wept when he died.

I said, "So it's almost like having a relationship."

"Not 'like.' It *is* a relationship," she said. ◆

PERSONAL HISTORY

GRAB ME A GONDOLA

Why is the author convinced that the best way to get around Venice is a Byzantine barge that costs four hundred and fifty dollars a day?

BY NICHOLSON BAKER

TWELVE years ago, I stood on the steps of the Church of the Gesuati with a ceremonial handkerchief in my suit pocket, and watched my soon-to-be wife set out with her father from the far side of Venice's widest and deepest-dredged waterway, the Giudecca Canal. The sky was the color of Istrian stone—i.e., white—and the water looked choppy. Their boat leaned to one side (all gondolas lean, but I didn't know that then): sunk low among the tufted silk cushions of their Byzantine conveyance, the passengers seemed to have their heads almost at water level. I worried that a large swell might slosh in unexpectedly from the side and capsize them.

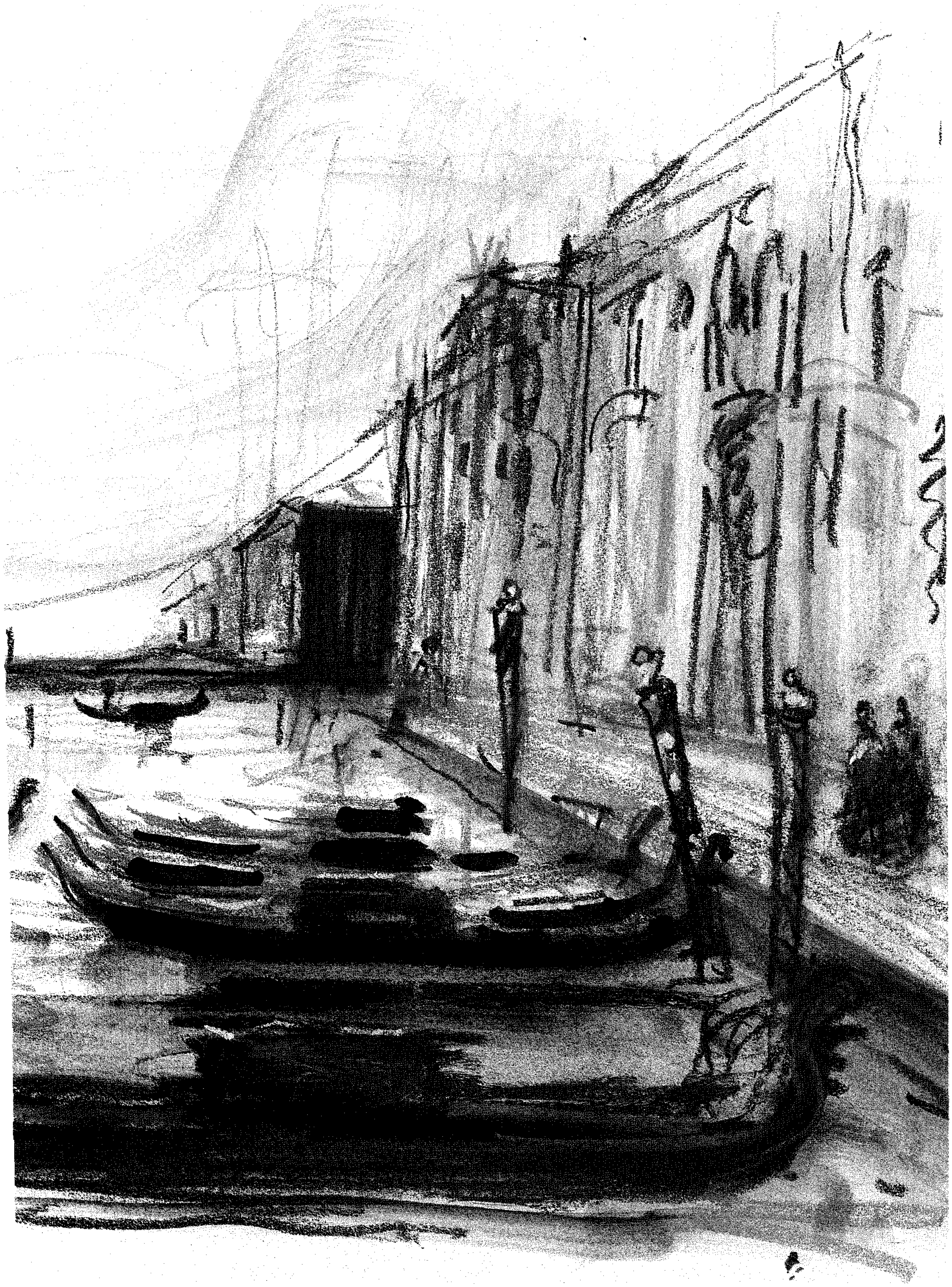
The oarsman at the stern, Bruno Palmarin, had been endorsed by the local grocer. Members of the Palmarin family have rowed continuously since at least 1740. Nowadays, when Bruno does weddings, his nineteen-year-old son, Giacomo, is usually the second rower. Their boat is black, of course, in compliance with ancient decree (there is, in fact, a paint color called nero gondola), but the oar blades are red-and-white striped, matching the rowers' wedding shirts, and over the sleeves of their white jackets they wear red armbands bearing the Palmarin family emblem (lion and palm frond) in four-inch lozenges of brass. Embellishing the gunwales are gilded cherubs that tug at bridles of black spiralling silk—these replicate the fittings of the state gondola owned by King Victor Emmanuel III. Most gondolas have a proverb cast in a decorative ribbon of brass just in front of the passenger well. Bruno's was written for his grandfather by Gabriele d'Annunzio, the poet: *Ogni alba ha il suo tramonto* ("Every dawn has its dusk").

Bruno doesn't row out onto the Giudecca Canal anymore unless a job like our wedding specifically requires it. When he was a boy, traffic on the canal was light enough that he could swim all the way across, but in recent years it has become a major thoroughfare, a sort of truck route, and its water is abob with the cross-purposed wakes of a vast range of boats: mid-sized motor launches, ramp-prowed car ferries, crane barges, tugboats, tiny paintless speed-wedges banging from one swell to the next with the sound of lawnmowers, eight-story Greek cruise vessels thrumming past like insurance companies that have come laterally adrift, and oval, flat-roofed vaporetti swerving in loose "S" shapes from shore to shore. Each of the spreading wave systems is reflected from the quaysides back into the central confusion. You may see ten boats, but you know that the water is mumblingly remembering the previous twenty-five. Only very late at night does the surface revert to its pre-propellerine calm.

This abundance of manufactured chop—known to Venetians by the ominous name of *moto ondoso*—accelerates the decay of the city's foundational stonework. And it makes life difficult for the venturesome gondolier, who stands upright on a bit of carpet high on the upcurving tailpiece of a half-ton craft without a keel, trying, as he and his counterweighted, steel-pronged prow seesaw unrestrainedly, to propel it forward with one oar, levered against a gnarl of polished walnut. His boat, with its sinuously side-rocking way of proceeding, is a curiosity, maybe even a marvel, of evolved hydrodynamics, but its peculiar nautical graces and efficiencies assert themselves only when it moves over relatively smooth water. A number of gondoliers say that the Giudecca Canal is dangerous. Bruno Palmarin avoids it not because it frightens him but because he thinks he looks out of place there. "In the choppy water, when you are struggling, when you are distrait, you feel ridiculous," he said to me recently. "You feel like a clown."

But my veiled *fidanzata*—a better import-word, perhaps, than the ungutsy

Spooning in the lagoon or slipping along


RUBEN ALTERIO

al, "the experience is startlingly pleasant—like sinking down in a warm bathtub, except drier, and with more interesting scenery."

"fiancée"—had a good time going across. "Out in the middle of the canal, it was perfect," she says now. "Everything looked silver and misty. I don't remember its being choppy at all." We got married, walked out the front door through a spray of rice, and stepped into life's black boat together. It was dark by then; the red carpet in the passenger well glowed. The peaked shape of the backboard behind our two seats and the tapering form of the bow reaching ahead of us into the shadows made me think of the Batmobile. There were two small gilded chairs for the best man (my father) and the maid of honor. We began to move. We surged in the dark up a narrow canal, the San Vio, going surprisingly fast. At the Grand Canal, my father said, "Wow! If you're going to go, this is definitely the way to go." As a partial wedding present, he gave us a plastic model of a gondola with a little red light bulb in its gold cabin. We proudly displayed it on a side table in our first apartment, and then it got packed away in a box marked "Toys," and I didn't give gondolas another thought for years.

A YEAR ago, we returned to Venice for the summer, to stay in my wife's parents' apartment, on the island of the Giudecca. The first week, we did a lot of walking in the crowded trinket lanes near the Rialto and San Marco, which are difficult to maneuver in with a three-year-old. The second week, my wife had a dream in which her tongue was a large black dog that she had to take out for a walk. It was a sign: we were doing too much on foot. The next day, we went on our first family gondola ride. The experience was startlingly pleasant—like sinking down in a warm bathtub, except drier, and with more interesting scenery. In aquatic shade, we turned tight corners in our long manual limousine, clearing edges of powdery brick by a quarter of an inch, admiring an occasional commemorative plaque (Byron is still big), with sunlight and strangely inverted conical chimneys and life-evincing laundry high overhead. There was no bad smell. My three-year-old son put his head in my lap and went to sleep; my nine-year-old daughter pointed out that the rotting doorways and passing tableaux were like Disney's "Pirates of the Caribbean." Some Frenchwomen on a bridge flirtatiously chided the gondolier, who had a fluffy ponytail and wraparound sunglasses, about his lack of a hat. Occasionally, a thirties-looking wood-panelled water taxi disturbed our Edwardian trance as it dieseled by with the ruminative sound of toilets flushing. The people on it detached their faces from the rubber flanges of their video cameras and looked at us wistfully. They had thought they were being very clever by hiring a water taxi, since you can go so much farther in one, but now, seeing our silent, artful, blissful progress, our movement at the ideal speed of architectural self-disclosure, they were less sure: maybe they, too, should have gone for the gondola. Without warning, I was seized by the sob-of-family-happiness-welling-up-during-an-expensive-vacation feeling. *We had gone for the gondola.* It was an ancient and noble boat, which summed up many lost beautiful things, and while we were aboard it Venice itself seemed worth all the guidebooked fuss. Any means of transportation that could produce that much joy in fifty minutes, for a cost of a little over a hundred dollars, including tip, deserved some study.

WE went on several more gondola rides. On a very windy morning, we got on a boat manned by a square-jawed regatta champion named Franco Grossi, a seventh-generation oarsman and a practitioner of Eastern medicine, to whom colleagues went for help with the sorts of ailments (e.g., tennis elbow and back pain) that afflict rowers. I told him I wanted to use the gondola the way people would have used it in the nineteenth century, simply as a means of getting somewhere. Could he take us to the Ponte dei Pugni, or Bridge of Fists, where, according to the Blue Guide, there was an English-language bookstore? He said nobody did that sort of

THE LADY IN THE BAKERY OF THE MAD

"I was the barber
in the basement of
a mental hospital
before I was crazy," he says.
He is the barber in
the basement of the hotel.
"I hit a big black man
in the temple with a bar
of Ivory soap. Knocked him flat.
Never saw him after that."

He pins a paper collar
to my neck. I hear
him fold the gentle paper
into a collar like leaves,
and like water.

The water—it rubs away the eyes
of the lady in the soap.

The barber has arms like wood.
His name is Clarence.
He swallows as if the water
ran down a dark slick branch
in a throat like a pipe.

The dove of the soap.
The girl. The water.

Clarence has stomach dwarfs.
"I can hear them talk," he says.
"They live their lives in the bakery
and make the little figurine
on the wedding cake
on its little stage
live with the groom
who will never be her age.
I had three wives,
and I'm crazy," he says.

I want to marry
the little slender figurine
of Marilyn in its wedding dress,
and be with her in a dark coat
and smooth bland shoes,
and with the receptive
smile of the figurine
in the bakery of the mad;

and Clarence Marshall
is the barber in
the basement of the hotel
and is my wedding guest
and prepares me
for the woman that is his,
for the woman in the little tower
beneath the lid, who is mine,
whom I give bread,
who gives me back the bread
with wine.

—STEPHEN R. JAMISON

thing anymore in a gondola—went from Ponte A to Ponte B. Everyone went in loops and ended up where they started. "But I like doing crazy things," he said. We bobbed along for a while, and then, as we got closer to the mouth of the Grand Canal, there was a major gust of wind that produced fine crinkles on the tops of all the swells. The gust, combined with some large heaves from a ferry, made us suddenly slide around sidewise. "There was a little problem back there," Grossi conceded a few minutes later. The gondola is flat-bottomed, he said, and the wind, under certain rare conditions, can get under it and flip it over.

Things were quieter once we had entered the San Trovaso Canal and slid past a boatyard, where there are often three or four gondolas turned on their sides while their hulls are sanded down and repainted. Then we turned right on All-Saints' Canal, and right again on the Canal of Lawyers, and Grossi pointed to the unprepossessing center of gondola history—the shop of the Brothers Tramontin, where Domenico (El Grando) Tramontin perfected the modern gondola's asymmetries in the eighteen-eighties. Finally we reached the Bridge of Fists. The bookstore was gone. Its old shelves were holding lettuces and radishes, overflow from a highly successful produce barge that moors there. But it didn't matter. We bought some spinach and went home—altogether a delightful trip.

Then, in my son's sleepy company, I took a ride with a pilot named Marco, who moored his boat at the Church of the Salute and looked like Billy Crystal. When I asked Marco what the most difficult thing about being a gondolier was, he said, "The other gondoliers . . . Mostly the old gondoliers . . . They have small brains, believe me."

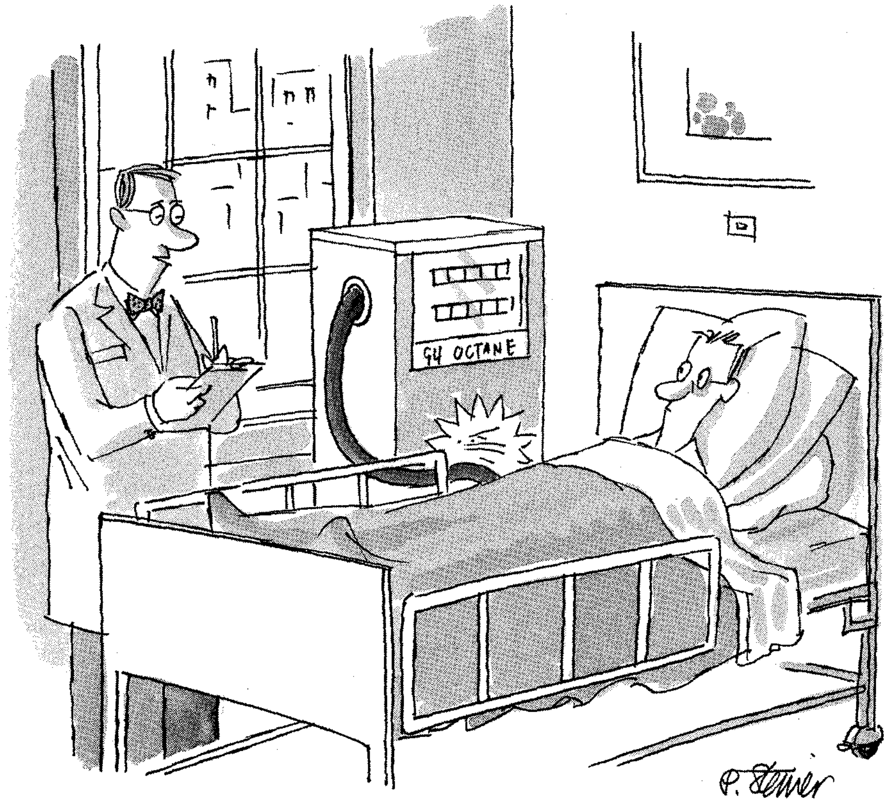
In his father's time, he said, a family would hire a gondola for the whole day. I asked him how much it would cost to do that now. "I think eight hundred thousand lire," he said.

That's a pretty steep day rate, but (I said to myself) one total-immersion gondolar day—with a micro-cruise budget of four hundred and fifty dollars—would give a visitor a comprehensive oar's-eye view of several neighborhoods. And each ride would have a political component: it would be an act of defiance against the water taxis and other arriviste wave generators—a vote for a quieter city, something more than mere tourism. Why not skip the twelfth or fifteenth absurdly expensive meal, in which three kinds of repulsive shellfish are mixed with a noodle of no distinction, and instead buy eight dollars' worth of cheese and olives at the local *salumeria* and eat out at twilight in the very kind of boat that kings and popes and clubfooted poets would have ridden in?

Eros the Oarboy is as familiar today as he was in "Lady Chatterley's Lover," where Giovanni the gondolier is "devoted to his ladies, as he had been devoted to cargoes of ladies in the past." At night, there is, I have noticed, a considerable amount of giggly public gondolier-kissing in the city by groups of women carrying bottles of wine. My wife made up a song: "Come into my gondola, I'm going to fondle ya."

I have no quarrel with that. My only complaint is that there is no privacy available to the passengers of these boats. You are compelled to take the waters in a convertible. The *felze* (wooden winter cabin) and *tendalin* (canvas summer hood) fell out of use forty or fifty years ago; unless these traditional enclosures are revived, the conventional tender moment on the water will be forever inhibited by the steady oar-plying and tour-guiding going on abaft. All potential romance has been realigned in favor of the presiding gondolier himself. Male passengers are adjuncts—balding lumps of flesh with wallets.

A full-fledged gondolier can expect to make a comfortable living. Tariffs have risen steadily, and most gondoliers are members of coöperatives that pool income and pay a percentage of health-insurance and pension expenses. "The gondola is alive because of money," Bruno Palmarin told me. But he is troubled by how narrowly income-obsessed some of his colleagues are now: they are relinquishing their traditional roles as ambassadors and civic proxies. Formerly, they rowed racing champions and political dignitaries during annual celebrations like the Regata Storica or the Sensa (the day on which the Mayor of Venice celebrates the city's marriage to the sea by tossing a ring into the water out by the Lido, while an unfortunate man with a microphone adds booming color commentary). Now the four-oared boats of honor are manned by volunteer members of the city's rowing clubs. "We should do that for free," Bruno said. "Who if not



"Of course, it's a highly experimental procedure, but we're trying out new techniques from other disciplines all the time."

the gondoliers? Our image is more important than immediate money. The image pays in the long term."

Much of the ill-feeling between the city and the gondoliers is a result of the rampancy of *moto ondoso*. Speed limits are posted on the Giudecca and the Grand Canal, but they are seldom enforced. The gondoliers want "strict repression," by which they mean traffic cops who will stop motormen—especially water-taxi drivers—from speeding and behaving recklessly. But the motormen evidently have powerful friends.

In principle, gondoliers have nothing against engines. Bruno's gondola coöperative owns ten big excursion launches and maintains the city's only reduced-wave water taxi, the Eco. In 1988, Bruno put his gondola in drydock and drove a water taxi for a year. He returned to the oar, though, because, he said, "I wasn't sweating enough." Sweating rowers created the Venetian Republic, one recalls: the gondola is a direct link back to the glory days when fifty-oared, ocean-roaming triremes earned or stole for the city its Renaissance fortune. The gondola's prow, not Evinrude's screw, is Venice's omnipresent postcard symbol, and for good reason: it would be sad if unregulated motor traffic succeeded in sweeping the chaotic waters in front of St. Mark's as free of black boats as the Giudecca Canal is now.

Shouldn't it be possible to institute an *ora-remi*—an hour or two in the middle of the afternoon (when business slows down anyway), during which only human-powered vehicles would be allowed on all the canals? Several big six-oared barges, like the baroque *burchielli* that once plied the River Brenta to and from Padua, could then peaceably proceed, stuffed with happy map-flapping tourists, from San Marco up the Grand Canal, in place of the ubiquitously groaning No. 1 vaporetto. Imagine daylit water that had calmed down enough to reflect as it once did the Redentore or the porphyritic palazzi disappearing around the curve of the Grand Canal. Imagine the water-taxi men sullenly chewing toothpicks from the sidelines. Imagine the history-sheltering silence. Gondolas would pour from their moorings to celebrate, wedding bells would swing in their leaning towers, women would kiss their husbands or their gondoliers, and everyone would weep and spend lots of money. ♦

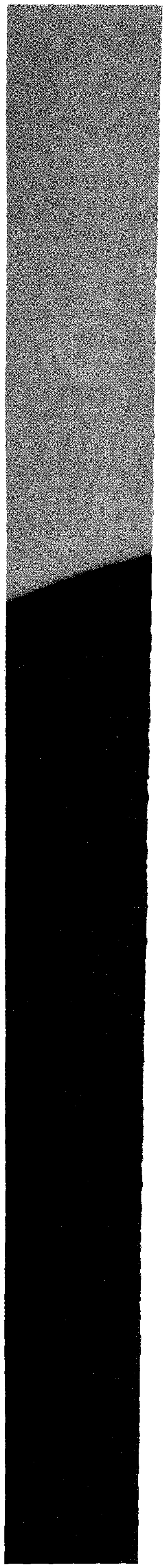
SHOWCASE BY RICHARD AVEDON

ROOTS

MANDY PATINKIN remembers Joseph Papp once asking him to learn a Yiddish song, "Youssel, Youssel," to sing at a benefit. "You have to do this music—this is your job," Papp insisted. Patinkin, whose vocabulary at the time included no more than a half-dozen Yiddish words, said that he would, and now, seven years after the producer's death, he has kept his promise. Nonesuch Records recently released an album called "Mamaloshen" ("Mother Tongue"), featuring the singer-actor in an all-Yiddish array of sixteen songs, which Patinkin, who is the son of Jewish immigrants, tosses off with great aplomb. (A few weeks ago, he performed selections from the CD at the Angel Orensanz Foundation Center for the Arts, on the Lower East Side, with the violinist Saeka Matsuyama, in a program he will repeat, in July and August, at the same location.) Thanks to the tutelage of two Yiddish experts, and to Patinkin's palpable delight in mastering the vernacular of his forebears, the language that the Germans called a "barbarous argot" dances like the nimblest fiddler on the roof.

For all the deprivation that these songs sometimes express—a delicately shaded remembrance of a lost town called Belz, a plea from a homeless seller of cigarettes, a lament for the immigrants who drowned on the Titanic—they are full of sweet hope, recalling Leo Rosten's description of the Yiddish language as having the "exceptional charm" of a "street gamin who has survived unnameable adversities." Above all, the songs remind us that assimilation has always been a two-way affair. Patinkin makes the point in several numbers by Jewish stalwarts of Broadway and Tin Pan Alley—Stephen Sondheim and Paul Simon among them—whose lyrics lose nothing in translation from English to Yiddish. As Patinkin sings in Irving Berlin's patriotic classic, "Got bentsh Amerike!"

—CHARLES MICHENER



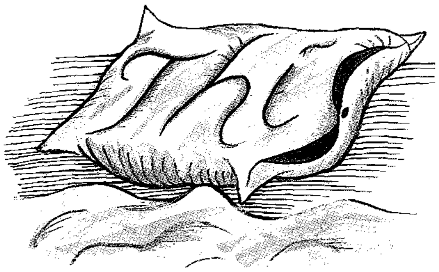
Mandy Patinkin and
Saeka Matsuyama, New York City

FICTION

TOUGH GIRLS DON'T DREAM

There just aren't enough hours in the day.

BY JEANETTE WINTERSON



morning I noticed there was a room missing.

I had woken as usual to the noises of singing drills and chirpy workmen, an aviary of tradesmen building nests out of the hollow of a derelict house.

I went out into the waking streets to buzz a newspaper off a sleep-deprived vender. Like the rest of the poor-in-sleep of the coming twenty-first century, he was a money junkie, trading shut-eye for a tight fist. Nobody can afford to sleep anymore. Do you realize how much it costs?

I am single. I have a girlfriend. I have a nice flat with a kitchen, a sitting room, and a bedroom, and in the bedroom, with the curtains drawn, or sometimes open, sometimes in the middle of the day, sometimes for pleasurable hours all morning, naked, warm, I sleep.

How did it start?

When I was born, Pharaoh-domed and blue. Pointed and Picasso'd. A Cubist baby of lines and planes. Not a breathing human yet. Still corded to God's architecture. Small gasps and liquid eyes. I slept.

When I was a wiggler, a crawler, a toddler, an upright, a walker, a runner, a highflier, spaced out, I slept. It came naturally to me. I lay down, closed my eyes. I slept.

Everyone I knew slept, too. Even my parents. And then . . .

MOST of the jobs advertised these days insist on a non-sleeper. Sleeping is dirty, unhygienic, wasteful, and disrespectful to others. All public spaces are designated "Non-Sleeping," and even a quick nap on a park bench carries a fifty-pound fine. You can still sleep in your own home, but all new beds are required by law to have a personal alarm clock built into the mattress. If you get caught on a bed check with a dead alarm, that's another fifty-pound fine. Three fines and you are disqualified from sleeping for a year.

I don't have a new bed. When I invited my last girlfriend to my flat for the first time, she had never seen a bed like mine.

"Wow. Is that an antique?"

"Do you like antiques?"

"Well, they're so . . . old."

"This is my bed. My one and only."

"What do you use it for?"

"I sleep in it."

"On special occasions?"

"Every night. Nine or ten hours every night."

"You mean every week."

I took her in my arms. I asked her to sleep with me.

"You mean lie awake with you? Everybody wants to know if we're lying awake together."

"Sleeping together."

She was worried. "Nine or ten hours a night?"

I nodded, addicted, dumb, sleep-hooked, sleepy.

She left.

I advertised in an underground magazine called *Snooze*. "Girlfriend wanted. Must have own bed."

I AM not rich but my sister is. She works for a German giant called Fafner UK. Their business is other people's money and the more they have the more they want. My sister was one of the first to give up sleep for the sake of her career. She works a twenty-hour day in two time zones. She worries about me.

"Hello. It's your sister."

"It's the middle of the night."

"I was worried about you."

"Don't worry about me."

"I saw your small ad in *Snooze*."

"How did you know it was me?"

"You put your name, address, and phone number."

She told me to see a doctor and get some waking pills. She offered me a job. I asked her why she had been reading *Snooze*. She didn't like that. She knows it's pornography. If you can find it in a shop it's always the top shelf, and by top shelf I mean you have to ask the assistant for a ladder. It takes a particular kind of somnolent courage to clatter on the aluminum steps through the eager beavers in the Hobbies section and clamber up past Adult Entertainment, S & M, Snuff, Necro, until you can fumble for the plain brown wrapper of *Snooze*.

I have asked the assistant to keep it under the counter for me, the way she does with the incest magazine, *Motherfucker*. She shook her head. "I can't do that with *Snooze*. Not *Snooze*. In any case, from next month you'll have to sign for it."

So there I was, with a sleep magazine on prescription. Yes, prescription. Doctor's orders, dear Sister. It's my new job, didn't I tell you about that?

I am a dreamer. I should write that with a capital, it has a title, it exists. Someone has to do it. I don't know how many of us there are. My I.D. card says "civil servant" and I try to dream as politely as possible. Dreaming is my job and my dreams are tele-electronically recorded and transmitted at Dreampoints around the city.

When the no-sleep life style was pioneered, it was soon discovered that people functioned better if they had a dream-boost. A pad on the heart and the wrist can electronically lull the body into a sleep state in seconds, but it can't dream. I can, and if you'd like to try me, my last night's dream will be on the headset in about an hour.

"You're working as a Dreamer?"

"Yes, and you're ringing me in the middle of the night."

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I had no idea you were official."

"Shall I send you a free disk?"

"Oh, I'd love that. Mark it private, will you?"

FILIP PAGOWSKI

She put down the phone. Tough girls don't dream.

THIS morning, I decided to go to the park and feed the rubber ducks. The real ducks died, because so many people were feeding them in the new twenty-four-hour working day that not a drake nor a duck had a moment to itself. Some sank under the weight of soggy bread, others exploded.

The sun shone. Maddeningly, it wouldn't shine during the night, but I'm told they're working on it.

I walked quickly, purposefully, through the dead-eyed crowds until I got clear of the feeding areas and onto a crisp grass knoll. No one ever comes up here, it's too aimless, no swings, no café, not even a bench.

I flung myself down and watched the clouds bumping each other, the break and mend of a morning sky. My body was relaxed and the ordered chords of my mind began to separate into component notes, to replay themselves without effort, without purpose, trailing into . . . sleep.

I dreamed I was a single moment in a single day. A note struck and vanished. A sounding. A reckoning. Gone.

I was awoken rudely. Far too rudely. The keeper prodded me with a sharp stick as though I were a beast in a zoo. I opened my eyes and the clouds were gone. A gray face, a dirty uniform, and the clenched fist scrawling a ticket.

Do you remember when park keepers used to spear litter and chat to mothers at the sandpit? No more. These scabrous patrols have stun batons and two-way radios. They clean up homosexuals and sleepers and prefer to be known by their official tag of Public Space Enforcement Officers.

Unfortunately, this one had fallen over. It happened suddenly. He was punching out his fine code when he toppled forward, face down into the grass. I turned him over and felt his pulse. Now I would be charged with murder.

He was not dead. He was snoring.

Carefully, I put his hat over his eyes and made a little palisade around him out of the plastic spokes and fluttery tape the keepers carry to cordon off areas of maximum security, like the rubber-duck pond.

As I went down the knoll I looked back. There was a faint blue gas settling at his head. I'd heard of this but

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ACROSS

1	C + RIB
4	ETCH (hidden)
7	HAS + SLED
8	AN + DREW
9	SPACEMAN (*name* + *caps* rev.)
11	TACK (2 defs.)
14	K + NEE
15	R(ETRE)ATS
16	O + ME + LET
17	PRESENT (2 defs.)
18	DO + N,S
19	A + SEA (*a "C"* hom.)

DOWN

1	CHAS(T)E
2	RAM + PAGE
3	ISAAC STERN (anag.)
4	EL + DER (*red* rev.)
5	TERMINATES (anag.)
6	HE(W)N
10	ACE + TONE
12	PE(SET)A
13	ARLES (anag.)
15	RO(A)D

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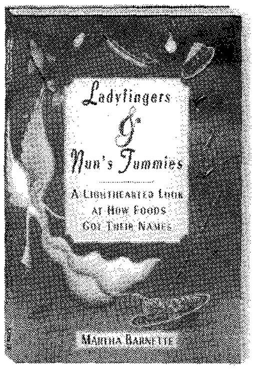
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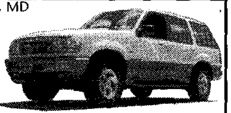

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I'd never seen it. It's what happens when the dreams return.

I GO to the sleep bar at the weekends. It's called Morpheus's Cave. It's dark, silent, racked with beds and open arms. I was hoping to find a girlfriend there, groping round with a flashlight, looking for a nice face. The trouble is, it's difficult to know how we'd get on when she is awake.

Last night I tried the Sleeping Beauty. It caters to a younger crowd, those who just want to drop off for an hour if they're passing. Maybe I'll find someone to talk to. Talking and dreaming. Dreaming and talking. All these clocks and no time.

In my city of dreams the roads lead nowhere; that is, they lead off the edge of the world into infinite space. Under my feet the road quickens, like one of those moving tracks at the airports. It's the road itself that carries me forward, until there is nothing under my feet but air. Where to now, without tarmac and map? What direction do I take now that all directions can be taken?

These dreams of mine are carefully screened for disruptive elements.

At the Sleeping Beauty I ordered a shot of brandy with a jug of hot milk in it and went to lie down in the Pillow Room. The Pillow Room is where most of the girls go. It's dark, soft, and there's a Dream Screen on the wall. When I walked in they were playing one of my dreams.

"That isn't how it ends," I said, before I could stop myself. "It was a nightmare. I wasn't running happily over the just planted earth."

A couple of girls got up and went off to the ZZZ Bar. I was left alone with a wide-awake redhead squirrelling out the contents of her handbag.

She offered me a sleeping pill. I shook my head.

"It's not sleep I need," I said.

She looked disappointed and lay back on the pillows watching the screen. The dream was over, we were in an advertising break, something about the quality of life on a new breakfast cereal called Go!

I rolled over beside her and kissed her surprised mouth. Horizontal contact is strictly forbidden in play-at-it bars like the Sleeping Beauty.

Later, walking home arm in arm, we talked about opening a fish restaurant by the sea. Holiday resorts are Sleep-Designated Areas. The difficulty is that everyone is too exhausted to eat. Most go intravenous for a fortnight in August.

"I'm lucky," I said. "I'm a Dreamer."

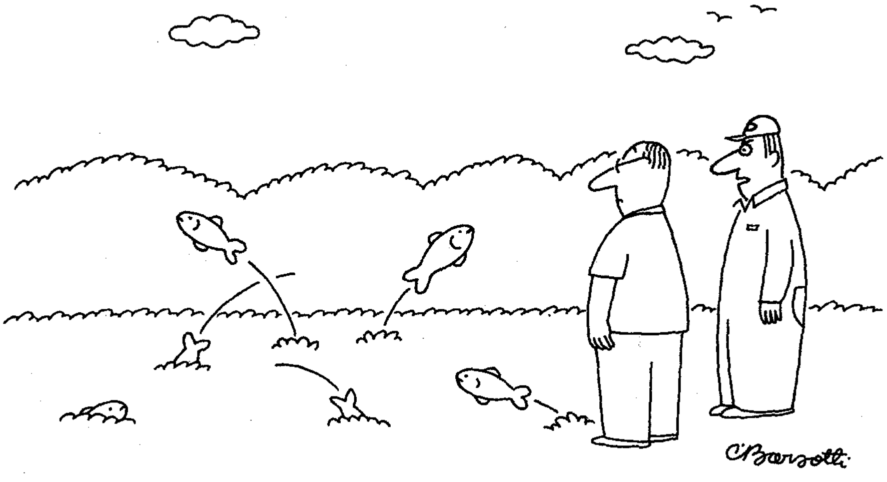
I don't know if she understood. Then came the tough question. The question I had been afraid to ask.

"Will you sleep with me?"

Under the night rug, the star rug, the man in the moon watching over us, Dog Star at his heels, we lay.

The planets were bodies in the solar system and so were we. You and I in elliptical orbs circling life. It was life we wanted, but we dared not come too close for fear that life, in its intensity, might burn us up. We called it life force, and it was, force enough to push the shoot through clay. Force enough to impel the baby out of nothing into light.

When I held you in that night-soaked bed it was courage for the day I sought. Courage that when the light came I would turn towards it. It couldn't be simpler. It couldn't be harder. In that little night-covered world with you, I



"Lawn fish. They're hell to get rid of."

hoped to find what I long for: a clue, a map, a bird flying south. And when the light came we would get dressed together and go.

And so it was morning and I went to buy the paper. I came back to my flat and went into the kitchen to make coffee. I took a cup to the bedroom and that was when I discovered that the bedroom was no longer there.

I called your name and there was no answer. I stared at the wall, the wall where the door had been, where the bedroom had been.

There was a noise behind me. It was my landlord.

"What are you doing here?" I said.

"Supervising the conversion," he said. "Didn't you get my letter?"

He was holding it in his hand. I read it. It informed me that my bedroom was to be made into a separate flat. My bedroom was surplus to requirements. It was quaint, out of date, something like a vegetable allotment in the age of the supermarket. It was a luxury. I couldn't afford it.

"But this is a one-bedroom apartment."

"You have a kitchen and a sitting room. What more do you want?"

"I want a bedroom."

He shook his head, in regret, in disbelief, offended. I followed him outside to where a couple of men were fitting a new front door into what had been my wardrobe space. There was a large box on the pavement, marked "Clothes."

"Where's my bed?"

"Don't need a bed if you ain't got a bedroom," said one of the workmen logically.

"Where is it, and where is what was in it?" There was a leer, or a sneer, or a jeer. They shrugged.

"Ask in the Macbeth," they said, pointing to the pub at the end of the road.

The Macbeth is a twenty-four-hour swill bar, a thug trough, a beer urinal. I ran down there, and as I crashed through the doors I saw my bed, trussed, trophied, pissed on, stabbed, empty.

"Where is she?"

Sometimes I think I'll find her, as though I had never lost her. Sometimes at the draw and ebb of the sea on a clear night, I see her walking just in front of me and I swear there are footprints. She was a clue I tried to follow, but I live in a world that has lost the plot. Sleep now and hope to dream. ♦

(Advt.)

Comedy is indeed a serious business.

Po Bronson has written a comic novel about business—the computer business, to be precise. His wryly titled ***THE FIRST $20 MILLION IS ALWAYS THE HARDEST*** offers us a no-prisoners-taken look at the inner workings of a successful Silicon Valley concern. This is a keen and crafty satire of greed and manipulation among the entrepreneurs, engineers, iron men, and whiz kids who power the ongoing technological revolution. Bronson's take on the brutalities and absurdities of a cutthroat, cutting edge enterprise reads like the literary product of a bloodied but unbowed veteran of the computer wars: eminently wise and knowing, and rich in pungent, often outrageous detail. His book posits that neither Man nor machine is infallible—and that neither can be trusted when the microchips are down.

Dennis Perrin's ***MR. MIKE*** is an admiring yet uncompromising evaluation of the strange life and wicked art of the late Michael O'Donoghue—the man who made comedy dangerous—key contributor to the legendary humor magazine National Lampoon and sketch writer for the classic opening seasons of television's "Saturday Night Live." Author Perrin's word-portrait of this doomed dark humorist nonpareil is an eye-opening exploration of an extraordinary mind, chronicling the bizarre evolution of a comedy that spared no feelings and left no sacred cows unslaughtered.

CALENDAR, on the other hand, is no laughing matter. Building to the ten days "lost" in the changeover from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in 1582, David Ewing Duncan recounts one of the great hitherto untold stories of civilization. It's a journey that spans 13,000 years, from humankind's first crude attempts to record the passing of days to the problematic development of the atomic clocks of today, which measure time too accurately. His book is a fascinating chronicle of the historical initiative to set time right.

We'll talk again.

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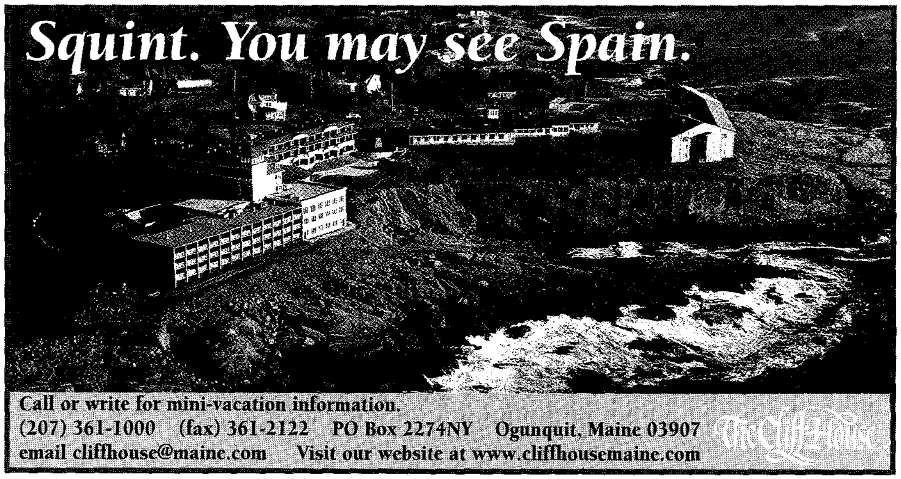

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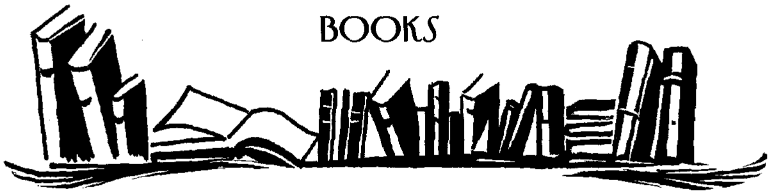

BOOKS

A VITUPERATIVE ART

The importance of not being earnest.

BY JAMES ATLAS

English autobiography suffers from terminal reticence. I have a whole shelf of slender, well-mannered volumes, the great preponderance of which appear to have been written by Anthony Powell, and the rest of which might as well have been. With unflagging equanimity, their surface untroubled by unseemly displays of ambition or nutty behavior, they gently take the reader's hand and lead him on a sedate ramble through childhood, public-school days, early career setbacks in London, amusing encounters at the club—a numbing chronicle of names and dates recounted in the prose equivalent of an Oxbridge mumble. No blurting about dysfunction here.

Auberon Waugh, to his great credit, has infused some much needed verve into this somnolent genre. "Will This Do?" (Carroll & Graf; $24), published in Britain seven years ago and at last available in the United States, is both an exuberant chronicle of English literary life and a very funny sendup of the form. Describing an adventure in which some university cronies took a Pullman coach to Brighton and back, he writes, "It is hard to think of any reason for organizing such an occasion unless someone is going to mention it in his memoirs." From its opening "Apologia," in which he quotes a damaging entry about himself from the journal of his celebrated father, Evelyn—"Bron is clumsy and dishevelled, sly, without intellectual, aesthetic or spiritual interest" (this when the boy was a mere seven years old)—to its last line, an abject refrain of his title, Waugh the younger's autobiography is a sustained exercise in self-disparagement. The author, if one is to believe him, has led an entirely frivolous existence for the past half century: he failed his exams at Oxford and was overshadowed there by the family name; his novels don't amount to much, nor do his millions of words of journalism; he accomplished everything he had hoped to accomplish in life by the time he was thirty-four, and has been frittering away his talent ever since. Waugh, in his own summing up, has vindicated his father's stern assessment.

Yet "Will This Do?," for all its hat-in-hand, foot-scuffing timidity, bristles with brash opinion. Waugh writes things that no American writer would dream of even thinking, much less printing in a book: a rude dismissal of "whingeing literary critics of the Cambridge and red-brick schools"; a snide insinuation that the clergyman father of Jonathan Raban, a distant relative of Waugh's, may have had Jewish roots; mocking references to blacks, homosexuals, West Indians. He smirks at "working-class youths" and professes to find the poor "irritating." Sometimes he's pointlessly insulting. If Kenneth Tynan is "wretched," shouldn't Waugh say why?

No doubt many American readers, inoculated against wrong thinking by the p.c. fanaticism that has long dominated our literary and intellectual discourse, will wince involuntarily at these unfashionable—or are they now illegal?—animadversions. They needn't. Waugh is simply practicing his craft, as he has done so splendidly in the pages of just about every major newspaper and weekly magazine in England for nearly forty years: journalism, in his own phrase, belongs among "the vituperative arts." His politics, however shrill to our reflexively liberal ears ("My hatred of socialism, like some facial wart which can be concealed by make-up for only a time, was beginning to show"), are in fact middle-of-the-road; cant, pretension, "phoniness"—to use Holden Caulfield's word—are what provoke his intemperate tirades. His columns in *The Spectator* over the years have picked on sanctimonious Royal-watchers like Nigel Dempster ("born in the Antipodes and snatched from a dingo's jaws"); lobbyists for the disabled; child psychologists from the National Health Service potty-training brigade; and anyone else in Britain who has ever been guilty of officiousness. The real enemies of society, in Waugh's estimate, are the anhedonic: puritans and teetotallers like the "bores and pompous oafs" who banned him from entertaining at the Reform Club after a particularly raucous party—the kind of people who turn up in the pages of *Private Eye's* most popular feature, "Pseuds Corner."

Waugh's credo—"The more one annoys them the better"—is distinctly at odds with the traditions of American journalism. Our job is to ingratiate ourselves, cultivate our sources—in other words, curry favor in exchange for cultural power. On Fleet Street (largely reduced to a synecdoche now that Rupert Murdoch has removed his newspapers to the fortress of Wapping) journalists still tend to look upon their mandate as vengeance rather than as accommodation. What really quickens Waugh's blood is getting even. Time and again, he stirs himself at the prospect of battle—pushing a rival off the *Daily Telegraph's* editorial page, sniping at "the boorish and conceited" Labour politician Anthony Crosland, "persecuting" poor old Cyril Connolly. He scorns the "pathetic attempt" to elevate journalism to "a serious profession, even statesmanlike in its responsibilities." For Waugh, it's a blood sport. Malice invigorates. "Of all the qualities of the British, this readiness to mock and subvert is the one which makes life in Britain preferable to life anywhere else," he writes. In America, the only political satirists left are the cartoonists. Everyone else is vying for a good table at the White House Correspondents' Dinner.

As I made my way through this comically splenetic book, in which politicians, pundits, and socialites are laid waste with such indiscriminate gusto, I thought sadly of how undervalued invective is in our tight-lipped society. Only conservative columnists employ it with any regularity as a rhetorical device, and in the hands of Pat Buchanan or the think-tank crowd at the American Enterprise Institute it's more of a

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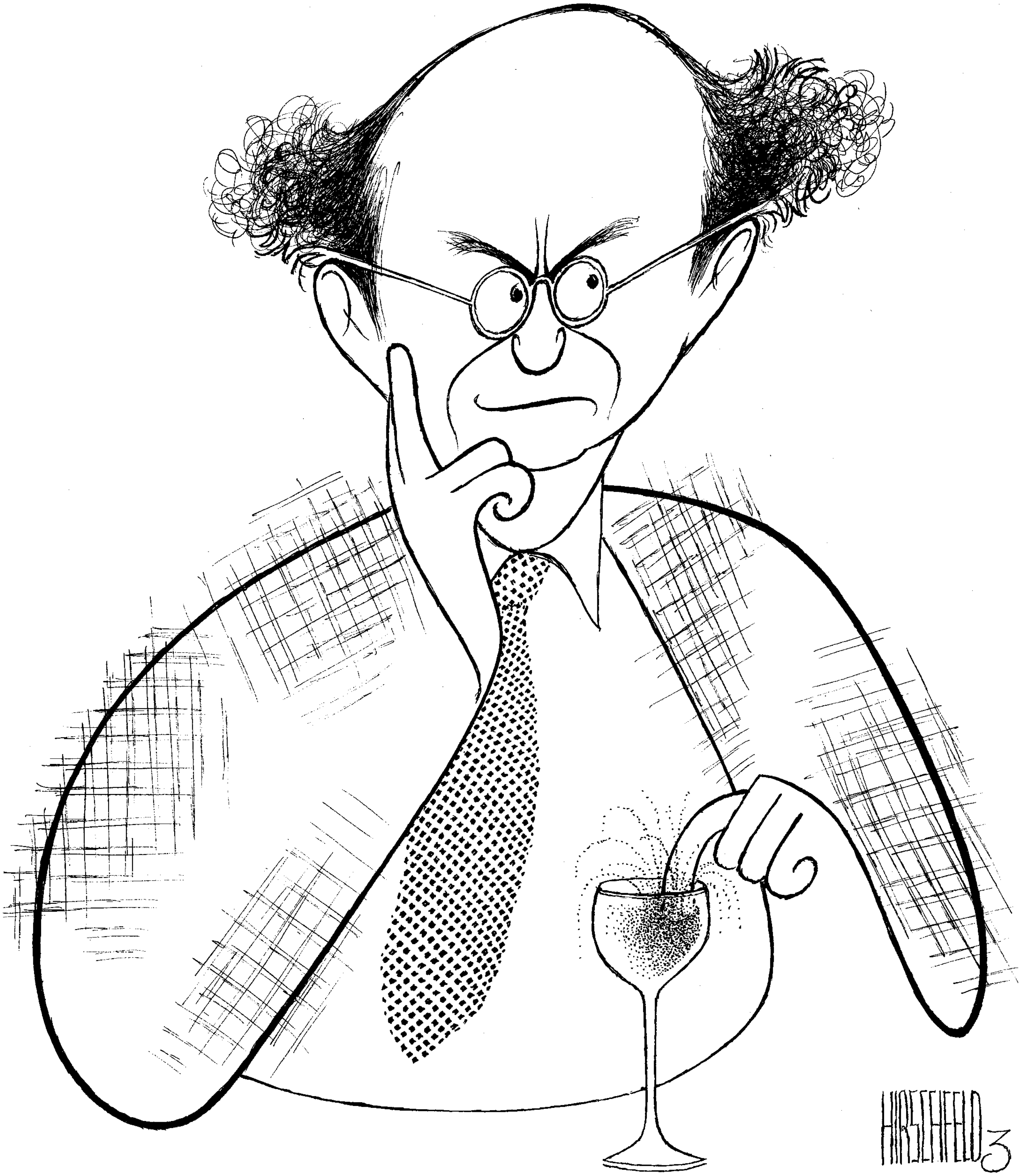

HIRSCHFELD 3

Waugh's credo—"The more one annoys them the better"—is distinctly at odds with the traditions of American journalism.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Chopin in Paris, by Tad Szulc (Scribner; $30). Fryderyk Chopin was a sickly, haunted man whose music and person united disparate worlds: the elegance of aristocratic France, the popular patriotism of oppressed Poland, the sensibilities of male and female. His eighteen years spent in Paris are the focus of this smart and reverent study, which finds the composer at the center of a brilliant whirl of Romantic art and revolutionary politics. It was also the scene of his unconventional (and largely sexless) love affair with George Sand, the one woman who could match him as a gender-bending workaholic.

The Queen of Whale Cay, by Kate Summerscale (Viking; $21.95). This small jewel is a biography of Marion (Joe) Carstairs, a Standard Oil heiress who built and raced one of the fastest motorboats of the nineteen-twenties. Brazen, tyrannical, and chummy in turn, Carstairs, whose lovers included Marlene Dietrich, was a notorious cross-dresser and, in middle age, the self-proclaimed queen of a Bahamian isle. The author chanced upon her subject during a tenure as obituaries editor for the London *Daily Telegraph:* she relates her story with deadpan glee.

Seeing Like a State, by James C. Scott (Yale; $35). Scott's subject is the failure of the grand utopian schemes that have characterized this century—cities like Brasília, societies like the Soviet Union, the high-modernist enterprises of Le Corbusier. But first he explains the ways in which a central power makes society itself "legible": the creation of universal last names, the rationalization of city plans, the elimination of local standards of measure. Illuminating and beautifully written, this book calls into sharp relief the nature of the world we now inhabit.

The Bad Daughter, by Julie Hilden (Algonquin; $18.95). While Hilden was growing up, her mother alternately neglected and berated her. She escaped, to Harvard, but her mother festered, prey to early-onset Alzheimer's, which had been causing much of her behavior. Hilden ticks off her sins: her abandonment of her dying mother to an aunt's care; her feral, loveless trysts; her refusal to attend her mother's funeral. But this memoir is less a weird apologia than a grim fairy tale, in which the author gets her comeuppance: a fifty per cent chance of inheriting her mother's illness.

The Bend for Home, by Dermot Healy (Harcourt Brace; $24). "Well, are you finding anything good in it?" Healy's mother asks him as he flips through the diary he kept in his sixteenth year (peccadillos noted in code under saints' days). The author brings to his task of reconstructing an Irish boyhood, first in the dappled village of Finea, and then in the market town of Cavan, an ear for the sluice of memory—both the rushing water and the sound of the gates—and his descriptions of the pulse and whirr of adolescence are light and true.

bludgeon. As for cultural commentators—Waugh, by the way, is admirably versatile, capable of acerbic displays of opprobrium in both literature and politics—the only exemplars of insult I could come up with were Robert Hughes, Christopher Buckley, Molly Ivins, and the Baron Corvo-like James Wolcott. And let's not forget Gore Vidal, that master of the lip-curling sneer. "Vituperation is not a philosophy of life nor an answer to all life's ills," Waugh writes. "It is merely a tool, a device, part of life's rich pageant, and in the right hands, a happy part of life's pageant, a salutary tool. It redresses some of the forces of deference which bolster the conceit of the second-rate; it also prevents the first-rate from going mad with conceit." Hear, hear.

Waugh belongs to a long line of English fulminators, going back to Swift and his "Modest Proposal," which recommended serving up the children of the poor at the tables of the rich; to Pope's scathing "Dunciad" and Dr. Johnson's haughty denigration of his contemporaries in "Lives of the Poets"; to Macaulay's brutish diatribe against Boswell and, in our own century, George Orwell's notorious attack on "little old ladies in tennis shoes." But his true model is Malcolm Muggeridge, as peripatetic and versatile a journalist in his day as Waugh, and a man for whom free-floating animosity was a way of life. (Anthony Powell, who worked for Muggeridge at *Punch*, lamented his employer's "deeply engrained inability to grasp that *toute la vérité n'est pas bonne à dire.*")

Waugh's memoir points up another Anglo-American dichotomy. His account of how he became the wine critic for the *Tatler* when it was under the editorship of this magazine's current editor is notably unapologetic; he's cheerful, even proud about the opportunity. An American journalist in his position would grow red-faced at the mere thought of writing a wine column. Waugh puts a high premium on having fun; he revels in stints he did producing book reviews for the *Daily Mail* and writing the Peter Simple column in the *Daily Telegraph*. He is practical, if not outright mercenary. His only reason for writing an autobiography at all, he claims, was utilitarian: "A professional writer has only so many shots in his locker, and autobiography is one of them." In America, we practice a division of literary labor: the novelists write novels, the poets write poems, the memoirists write memoirs. Reviewing is for academics, journalism is for hacks. As Waugh says, "Only Americans and modernists convince themselves that anything they write must have the stamp of genius." In England, a writer is a writer: Julian Barnes beavers away at long reporting pieces about chess tournaments and Lloyd's of London; Martin Amis covers Wimbledon. It's O.K. to have a job, by which I don't mean teaching: Waugh wrote the better part of two novels at a newspaper desk.

He's not always on the mark. There is an element of puerility in his humor: gross names (Lady Fartwell, Sir James Goldenballs); gratuitous hostility (he has no qualms about making fun of people's hair, complexions, waistlines, stutters, and even dwells on the homeliness of his children's nanny); dumb jokes (claiming he made a trip to Japan in order to research "the disputed point whether or not the Japanese had pubic hair"). And the cozy insularity of the Soho/Somerset-country-house world he chronicles may not travel well. How many American readers will take an interest in the details of hoary libel suits or the founding of the Academy club? Also, he's lazy, often repeating himself and serving up perfunctory transitions: ". . . as I say"; "And so to France, which will be described in the next chapter." Sometimes you feel he's just typing.

But, for all its jocularity, this isn't a trivial book. Waugh's portrait of his parents is masterly in its pathos. His morose and porcine father was a clinical depressive; his bibulous, distracted mother, who never found a useful occupation in life, ended as a widow pottering about her decrepit eighteenth-century pile and talking to her cows, her only other companion an eccentric local gardener who spoke in spurious proverbs: "They do say, madam, that if you see a crow with a broken wing, that means 'twill be a good year for raspberries." She died at the age of fifty-seven, "spending her last afternoon on earth cutting roses from the front of the house."

Waugh's account of his relationship with his father, a complex, oppressive presence, is nuanced and poignant; he tempers the elder Waugh's well-known—and well-deserved—reputation

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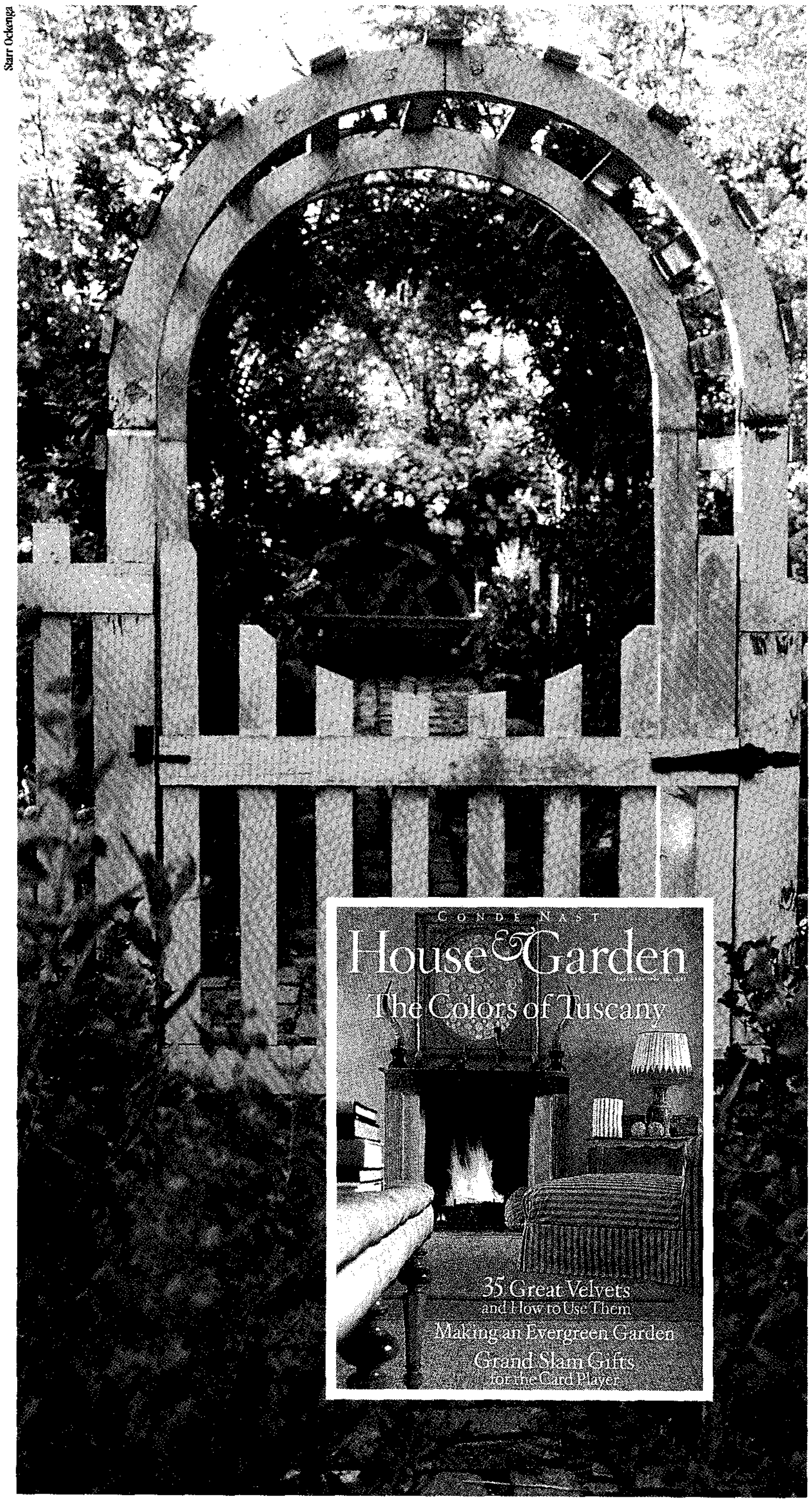

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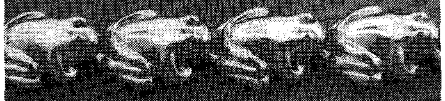

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as a curmudgeon by citing numerous instances of tenderness and solicitude. And if he admits that it was something of a relief when his father died, at the age of sixty-two, he also makes clear how much he misses him, even after three decades. Being the son of a famous man is never easy. Waugh is honest enough to confess that his illustrious name has helped his career—Graham Greene and John Betjeman praised his first novel—but it can't have been fun to have a father who dined by himself in the library.

Waugh also provides insights into the complicated matter of class. To say that he is a snob—which he is—gives no indication of how alert he is to class distinctions. Unapologetic about his own privileged sinecure as "a product of the bourgeois cultural elite," he notes without bitterness that he has always had to work for a living; the Waughs were more middle than upper class, and were often short of cash. As far as Waugh is concerned, his family's mild penury was a blessing: "Many of my friends have had their lives completely ruined by possession of a private income." About his own place in the firmament he's characteristically modest. His most enduring achievement, in his view, is to have effected a modest architectural restoration of the family estate, Combe Florey, by replacing the plate-glass windows, installed by the previous tenants, with the original timbered sashes:

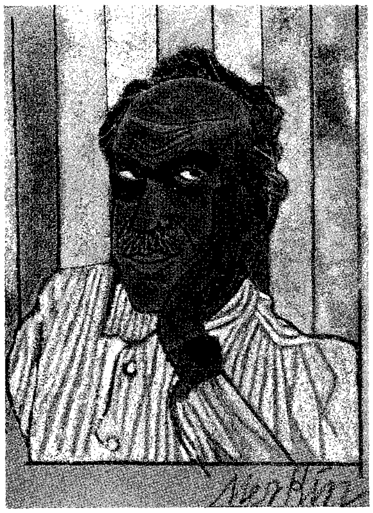
> They will be my monument. Having written five novels which give me little or no pleasure to re-read, ten other books of varying degrees of topicality—the only one which I would claim as my masterpiece, the second volume of *Eye* Diaries with illustrations by William Rushton, will so far fail Connolly's thirty-year test as to be incomprehensible within a decade [in fact, Connolly aspired to write a book that would last a decade]—and millions of words of ephemeral journalism, I am happy to have restored the windows of a minor country house to their former glory. There they will remain until the house is burned down, or taken over by the local authority as a hostel for unmarried mothers, who will no doubt wish to restore plate glass throughout.

But his true gift, as he acknowledges, is "for making the comment, at any given time, which people least wish to hear"—no small achievement, in my opinion. To answer the question that Waugh poses in his title: Emphatically, yes. ♦

FAMILY PLOT

In a new novel, Somalia falls apart.

BY SCOTT L. MALCOMSON



Nuruddin Farah

RICHARD MERKIN

THE Somali novelist Nuruddin Farah specializes in strange and difficult births. Sholoongo, for example, in Farah's new novel, "Secrets" (Arcade; $23.95), is said to have been a *duugan*, a baby born to be buried. (Farah writes in English, but he seizes words from Somali, Italian, or Arabic when he needs them.) Abandoned by her mother, Sholoongo purportedly finds comfort in the maternal paws of a lioness. As a child, she is returned to her people; her mother responds with suicide. Farah presents the story as if it were lively material from a deeply disturbing talk show. "You might think this far-fetched," one character says of Sholoongo's saga, "but this is the stuff of which some people's misfortune is made, myth galore!"

"Secrets" is an inquiry into the origins of a young man named Kalaman, who has long entertained doubts about his ancestry. When Sholoongo returns to Somalia, after a long absence, intending to become pregnant by Kalaman, her demand plunges him into self-examination. His penis is small, his father's and grandfather's are famously large. Sholoongo pointed this out to him long ago, but only in manhood has the incongruity hit him with full force. He wants to know the family secrets. He interrogates his parents, his grandfather, and Sholoongo about the truth of who he is. Understandably, this makes everyone uncomfortable, and increasingly so, for the more Kalaman knows, the more his family's myths collide and collapse. Is his father truly his father? And why does his mother have four breasts? Kalaman's line of questioning uncovers the brutal circumstances of both his own origins and his country's.

Farah sets "Secrets" in the moments before Somalia's breakup into warring clans. The dictator Mohamed Siad Barre is about to leave the capital, Mogadishu, after twenty-one grotesque years in power. Soon it will become a matter of critical importance whether you are from the Dulbahante or the Warsangeli subclan or are an Ogaadeen or a Marehan, or something else. If you don't know, you had better find out, or you might die without understanding why. In "Secrets" Farah reminds his readers that they will die anyway, that origins are a messy business, and that the truth of who one is may not be found in legends of birth.

NURUDDIN FARAH was awarded this year's Neustadt Prize; previous winners have been Octavio Paz, Gabriel García Márquez, and Czeslaw Milosz, each of whom went on to win the Nobel. Farah has become something of a spokesman for his African generation, but as a political novelist he is noticeably oblique. He overwhelms the ideological and historical premises of his books with a fabulist's imaginings—ambitious insects, hustling characters, opaque folktales, bits of song. Birds distract his characters in mid-argument, alighting on the page with charming disregard and pecking here and there, only to fly away; other animals, too, tend to visit unannounced—notably, crocodiles, though also, in "Secrets," a determinedly vengeful elephant.

This sort of narrative trampling has increased in the course of Farah's career. He wrote the trilogy that made his reputation, "Variations on the Theme of an African Dictatorship," in the late nineteen-seventies and early eighties, when he was in his thirties. Volume I, "Sweet and Sour Milk," sealed an exile begun several years before—Siad Barre cannot have enjoyed epithets like "the Grand Jailer of Somalia's Grand Prison"—and the three novels retain a certain clarity of political vision. But nature's importuning herd was already there, eager to block traffic, as when, in "Sweet and Sour Milk," two men having an urgent political conversation in a speeding car have to stop for "a camel right in the middle of the road licking the grass-remains."

As Farah's country has lurched through every conceivable form of governance short of stable democracy, and as he himself has aged, his stories have become more desperately fertile. He has also made them more comic. In "Secrets," poor, inquisitive Kalaman witnesses a bounty of copulations, all more spectacular than his own. They drive him to distraction. Crows, locusts, whiffs of sandalwood, tastes of tamarind juice and blood—all these interrupt his earnest efforts to determine his parentage. Especially blood, which is made to carry so many metaphorical meanings that it loses all sense as it spills across the pages. Kalaman's grandfather assaults him with talk of blood, his voice "like water seeping in," Farah writes. "It found space in Kalaman's empty skull, in which it formed puddles. Now as Kalaman touched his forehead, he thought: My God, I'm leaking." His grandfather floats dark thoughts in Kalaman's head, thoughts "as immense as the corpse of a hippo." The image is both nutty and apt—not so much comic as hysterical.

When Kalaman finally tracks down his origins, he finds a multiplicity of potential parents, impossible to trace. Farah links this to Somalia's fate. Kalaman stammers, "Yes, an epoch has resolved itself to a *finale!*" Farah has said that his ambition is "to keep my country alive by writing about it," and that may explain why his novels have so often concerned births. But in "Secrets" the investigation of a birth ends in violence, dissolution, and death. "Our country," Kalaman's once indomitable grandfather tells him, "is as good as gone." Even the novelist, try as he may, cannot keep it alive. ♦

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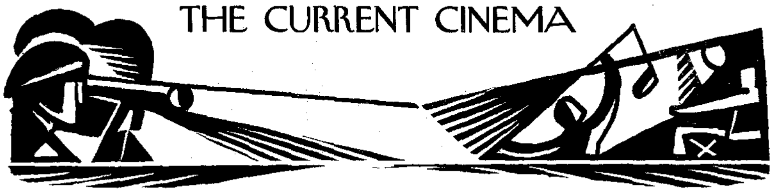
THE CURRENT CINEMA

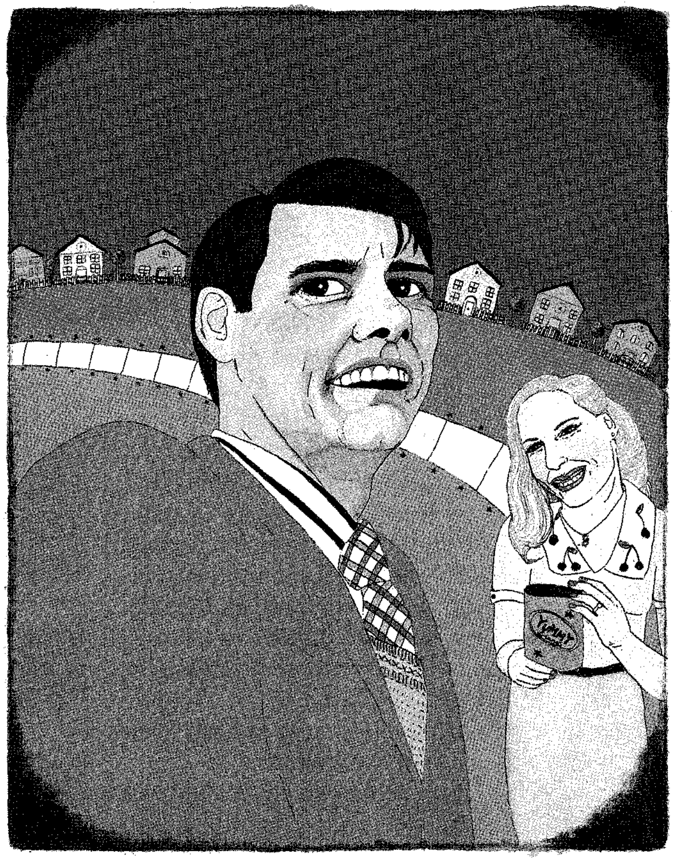


LOOK AND YEARN

Peter Weir creates a new world in "The Truman Show."

BY ANTHONY LANE

THE thoughtful new Jim Carrey picture, "The Truman Show," is set in a fictional town called Seahaven. Just how fictional the place is may be gathered from the weather or, rather, the lack of it; sunlight sugars the streets, not to mention the spotless whites and pastels of the houses, with the alarming benevolence of a laxative commercial. On those rare occasions when the climate falters, it does so with surprising accuracy. Take Truman Burbank (Jim Carrey), one of Seahaven's more congenial citizens. Married to the honey-blond Meryl (Laura Linney), Truman is a sweet guy who wouldn't hurt a fly, if there were any flies around to be hurt. One night, he finds himself caught in a downpour—to be specific, in a kind of stealth rain that falls on him alone, as if he were taking a shower, or as if God were trying to tell him something.



Jim Carrey is the star of the longest-running documentary soap opera in history, and Laura Linney plays his wife.

TARA TOMLIN

Into each life some rain must fall, of course, but Truman's life is not quite as each as he thinks. He is, in fact, the unwitting star of "the longest-running documentary soap opera in history," which is gulped down by billions of viewers. It began with Truman the fetus and will end, presumably, with his grand decomposition. He is as real as his name suggests, but everything around him is fake. His parents are actors; his friends are actors; even Meryl is a performer, and for all we know she gets a bonus every time she has sex with her unbeloved husband. The sky above is the roof of a cavernous biodome in which Truman's world is enclosed; follow the horizon far enough, and you bump gently into the skin of the dome's synthetic wall. The good people of Seahaven are extras, with earpieces to feed them their lines; in one beautiful crane shot, we see them pause on the sparkling sidewalks and wait for instructions, with the movie freezing like a photograph and Truman just around the corner. You look at these folks and wonder, Did their hearts just stop, or their batteries?

The plot of "The Truman Show" hangs on Truman's dawning awareness that he is not as other men, and on his plan to do something about it. His fear that he is being watched is both paranoid and wholly justified: there are five thousand miniature cameras concealed throughout the town. "Have you ever felt like that—like your whole life has been building up to something?" he asks his friend Marlon (Noah Emmerich). "No," says Marlon. So Truman runs, and gets nowhere. Magical fires blaze up in his path, and he is manhandled back home. He lies low and then tries again, setting sail in search of a new world or, at any rate, a world without product placement. The director, Peter Weir, has taken us on this trip before; Mel Gibson didn't want to flee Jakarta in "The Year of Living Dangerously" any more than Harrison Ford wanted to forsake his Amish homestead in "Witness," but, like Truman Burbank, each man knew that he couldn't stay forever. Truman has endured thirty years of living safely; now he craves a hit of risk, and the chance to play a bit part instead of a leading role.

Weir's touch is formidably sure; there is no living director who is more adept at convincing us that reverie need not be vague—that the dreamed or prefabricated can offer textures more crisp and unignorable than our drab quotidian rooms. Starting June 26th, Film Forum will run Weir's own cut of his début feature, "Picnic at Hanging Rock," which is too acute and perplexing to merit its reputation as a petticoat piece. "The Truman Show" is the closest he has come to recapturing that radiant nightmare, but, for all the unfogged clarity of Weir's eye, I can't help thinking that the new movie is slightly too charmed by its own conceit. If you show off the deliberate falsity of your surfaces, isn't that merely rigging the evidence for your subsequent unveiling of what lies below? The dark underbelly of America hardly comes as a shock when the dorsal fin is so plainly made of plastic.

There is also the question of Jim Carrey. Amid the ecstasy that has greeted advance screenings of the movie, Carrey has been lauded for tamping down his instinctive mania in favor of a more lightly tortured soul. To me, the spectacle is admirable but painful: he looks like a drunk who is not only making do with Pellegrino but pretending that he likes the stuff. What is unclear is why on earth half the planet would want to watch a man like Truman. As the film proceeds, we cut away to viewers around the globe—in an American bar, say, or a Japanese living room—as they thrill to the highlights in his existence, but the fact remains that a universe as enamelled and orderly as Truman's is desperately low on dramatic heft. It has no highlights—not until he makes a break for freedom. Weir's movie is, among other things, a venomous satire on our entrapment by television, and yet Seahaven satisfies none of the alluring criteria of the small screen: it is at once too serenely sanitized for documentary grit and not blessed with enough narrative molding to work as soap opera. Nothing much happens, very nicely, over and over again; the cameras even turn blushingly away when Meryl takes Truman to bed. If we have become a nation of morally gelatinous Peeping Toms, would we honestly be happy to spend years of our lives failing to see Mr. Everyman getting laid? And what of his hemmed-in happiness? How could he spend three decades believing that nothing was up? With his belted and checkered fifties suits, and his jumpy half grin, Carrey is as immensely likable as ever, but he's also too much the fool.

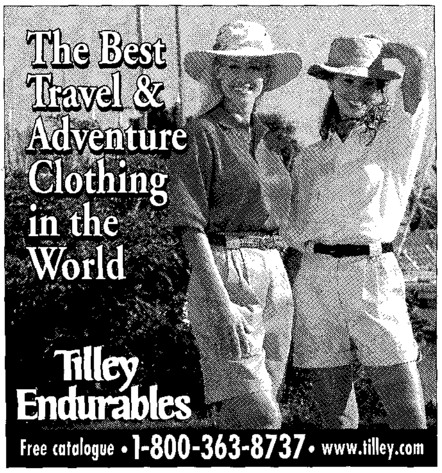
Weir and his screenwriter, Andrew Niccol, would presumably say that it is exactly the pressures of techno-pleasantry which have made Truman so dumb, and that the same would happen—already does happen, every time we switch on—to the rest of us. And it must be said that "The Truman Show" is as bright as hell and more smoothly provocative than the rest of the summer movies strung together. Nevertheless, it makes life too easy for itself, as it does for its hero, and I was intrigued to read an early draft of Niccol's script, which set Truman in the more testing and abrasive surroundings of New York. What murk there is in the finished film adheres to Christof (Ed Harris), the inventor and producer of Trumania. He sits in the control room, calling forth a storm or changing the baleful moon into a searchlight. "Cue the sun," he says as the hunt for the missing Truman gets under way. Harris's role here is the demonic mirror image of his mission chief in "Apollo 13": instead of guiding the lost boys home, he urges his marooned doofus to stay in inner space, and by the end it is he, more than Carrey, who tenses the movie for its climax. "I am the creator," he declares, adding, "of a television show." In that pause, and in Harris's terrifying attempts at a paternal smile, you catch all the mirthless comedy of Christof's megalomania; his wire-rimmed spectacles and his beret show you what happens when a *poète maudit* is turned loose on television. As yet, America has made no Truman Burbanks, but we await the coming of Christof every day. ♦

BABYLON REVISITED

Whit Stillman's tender Wasps are still young and troubled.

BY DAPHNE MERKIN

GIVEN our culture's consuming preoccupation with money, it's odd that the rich get such bad press in American movies; they're treated with disdain nine times out of ten, stereotyped as either boors or curmudgeons, in need of humanizing by misfortune or of ennobling by those with less in the bank. (Think "Pretty Woman," where a penniless prostitute makes the Richard Gere character see that there's more to life than counting gold. Thanks to Julia Roberts's coaxing, he not only gets to smell the roses but even takes his socks off and feels the grass between his toes.) It's a reflexive response, I think—a guilt-ridden mental habit on the part of screenwriters and directors who themselves often live high on the hog, or yearn to. However you account for it, though, the message is clear: to be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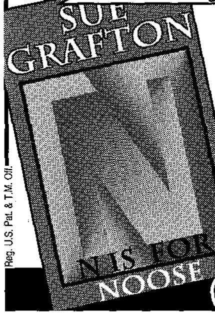
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wealthy is bad; to be poor(er) is better. I can hardly think of a film I've seen in the past year in which this wasn't the case, from "Titanic" to "The Big Lebowski."

But just when it looks as if there were no one out there to speak up for those besieged trust-fund kids, along comes a Whit Stillman movie to the rescue. If there's any filmmaker around who understands that the rich, too, bleed when they're pricked, it's Stillman. Beginning with "Metropolitan" (1990), his witty and affectionate look at life among the "U.H.B."s—a term coined in the film for the "urban haute bourgeoisie"—this talented writer-director has been exploring the anxieties that flutter beneath those smooth Ivy League exteriors. His characters—débutantes and their preppy escorts—sit around their parents' Park Avenue apartments when they're not at the St. Regis or the Plaza; they wear long gowns and tailcoats; and they engage in highly articulate, self-aware conversations in which references to Veblen, Trilling, and Buñuel are dropped alongside mention of Southampton, Brooks Brothers, and Chapin School dances. All this noisy entitlement coexists, however, with the silent spectre of Wasp downward mobility—the possibility that, as one character says, instead of being doomed to failure he and his set will "simply fail without being doomed." In Stillman's next movie, "Barcelona" (1994), he expanded his geographical orbit, focussing on two upper-crust cousins who share an apartment in Barcelona during "the last decade of the Cold War": Ted, a high-minded salesman who reads the Bible and quotes Dr. Johnson; and Fred, a brash naval officer bursting with Yankee pride. This second venture didn't have quite the sparkle of Stillman's début, with its perfect mix of pathos and insouciance. Yet it continued to offer evidence that the filmmaker was doing something singular—putting his imprimatur on a world that we would recognize ever after as Stillmanesque. He accomplished this in part by using the same pair of gifted young actors (Taylor Nichols and Chris Eigeman) in both films, but, more important, he remained faithful to the perspective of a specific social type—a type who comes to us from F. Scott Fitzgerald by way of Woody Allen, and who agonizes, as Fred does in "Barcelona," that "I could have shaved the wrong way all of my life and never have known it."

NOW, with "The Last Days of Disco"—billed as the third of a trilogy of romantic comedies, the chronological missing link between "Metropolitan" and "Barcelona"—Stillman is back on home turf, in the Manhattan of the early eighties. Charlotte (Kate Beckinsale) and Alice (Chloë Sevigny) are both graduates of Hampshire College (where they weren't friendly, because, as Charlotte explains to Alice with poisonous sweetness, "everybody hated you") and have jobs on the lower rungs of book publishing. They eventually become roommates, although they seem unsuited to each other: Charlotte, with pert features and a crisp dark bob, is overconfident and treacherous, while Alice, who has long blond hair and cautiously inhabits her own beauty, is a thoughtful good girl. What they have in common is a wish for boyfriends and a desire to hang out at what is referred to, totemically, as "the club." ("I heard there's a much better chance of getting in if you come by cab," one tells the other in the opening shots of the film.) Also present are a slew of men, Harvard graduates eager to take advantage of the club scene after the "terrible wasteland of our college years." These include Des (Chris Eigeman), the club's lightly amoral manager, who claims to be gay when he wants to break up with a woman; Jimmy (Mackenzie Astin), who's desperate to impress his clients by getting an entrée to the club and becomes Charlotte's boyfriend, despite her having declared frostily that "I could never be interested in anyone who worked in advertising"; Tom (Robert Sean Leonard), a corporate lawyer who beds Alice and then turns on her for her loose ways; and Josh (Matt Keeslar), a manic-depressive junior prosecutor who's capable of deconstructing any subject in dazzling depth, from Disney's "Lady and the Tramp" to the true meaning of disco fever.

These young professionals lack nothing visible, but they still suffer. The film's subtext—and Stillman's movies are always more subtext than text—is how the universe shrinks once you've left college, when "ferocious pairing off" replaces group social life. The recognizable Stillman touches are all here: the way the characters leap into ardent dialogue; the instant nostalgia for living in the moment even as it happens; the blunt, Cassavetes-style framing of scenes; and the funny incidentals. ("This recipe is extremely fast," Charlotte assures Alice as, with guests arriving for dinner, she dumps a can of Campbell's soup into a pan of shrimp.) Somehow, though, the film doesn't jell enough to leave an imprint. Stillman's sensibility has always been relatively light, but here it's positively gossamer. His tone, once so certain, seems to waffle: it isn't always clear what's parody and what's meant to be taken seriously. Perhaps this is because the disco motif is too slim to carry even the faux, tongue-in-cheek weight it's given, or perhaps it's because, with the exception of Sevigny's Alice, who has dips and corners and feelings we can't quite see, and Keeslar's touching, vulnerable Josh, a lot of the personalities seem to be drawn in outlines and not filled in. (I missed Taylor Nichols, whose nerdy, Episcopalian genteelness added substance to the two earlier films.) Then, too, it may be that the eternal youthfulness of Stillman's world—its quality of stop-time—has become a bit oppressive in itself. I felt unaccountably ancient watching "The Last Days of Disco," as if I had snoozed through a decade and grown older, Rip Van Winkle-like, while everyone else was still staying out all night, ordering vodka tonics and getting the clap. I wonder what would happen if Stillman let his young inheritors really grow up—get married, worry about schools, peruse the *Wall Street Journal* on the train in from Darien or Greenwich. I, for one, would be curious to see how they turned out. ♦

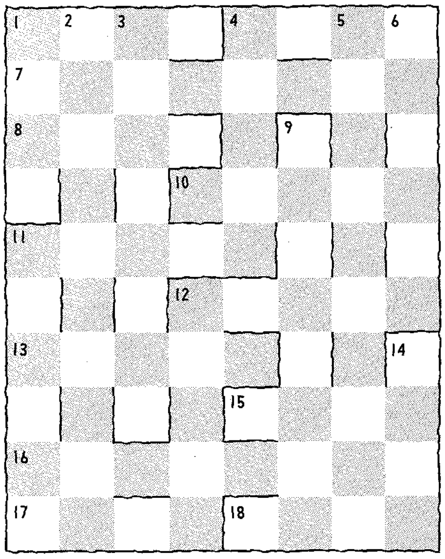
CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER

[From the Whitefield Police Report in the Lancaster (N.H.) Coös County Democrat]

Whitefield—It took almost 10 hours to clean up the mess left when a tractor-trailer rig hauling hemlock logs overturned on Route 116 on Feb. 25, just beyond the Mountain View Road in an area known as "Moose Hollow." The driver was cited for excessive speed and for being overweight.

8x10 CRYPTIC

NO. 47 BY TRIP PAYNE



ACROSS

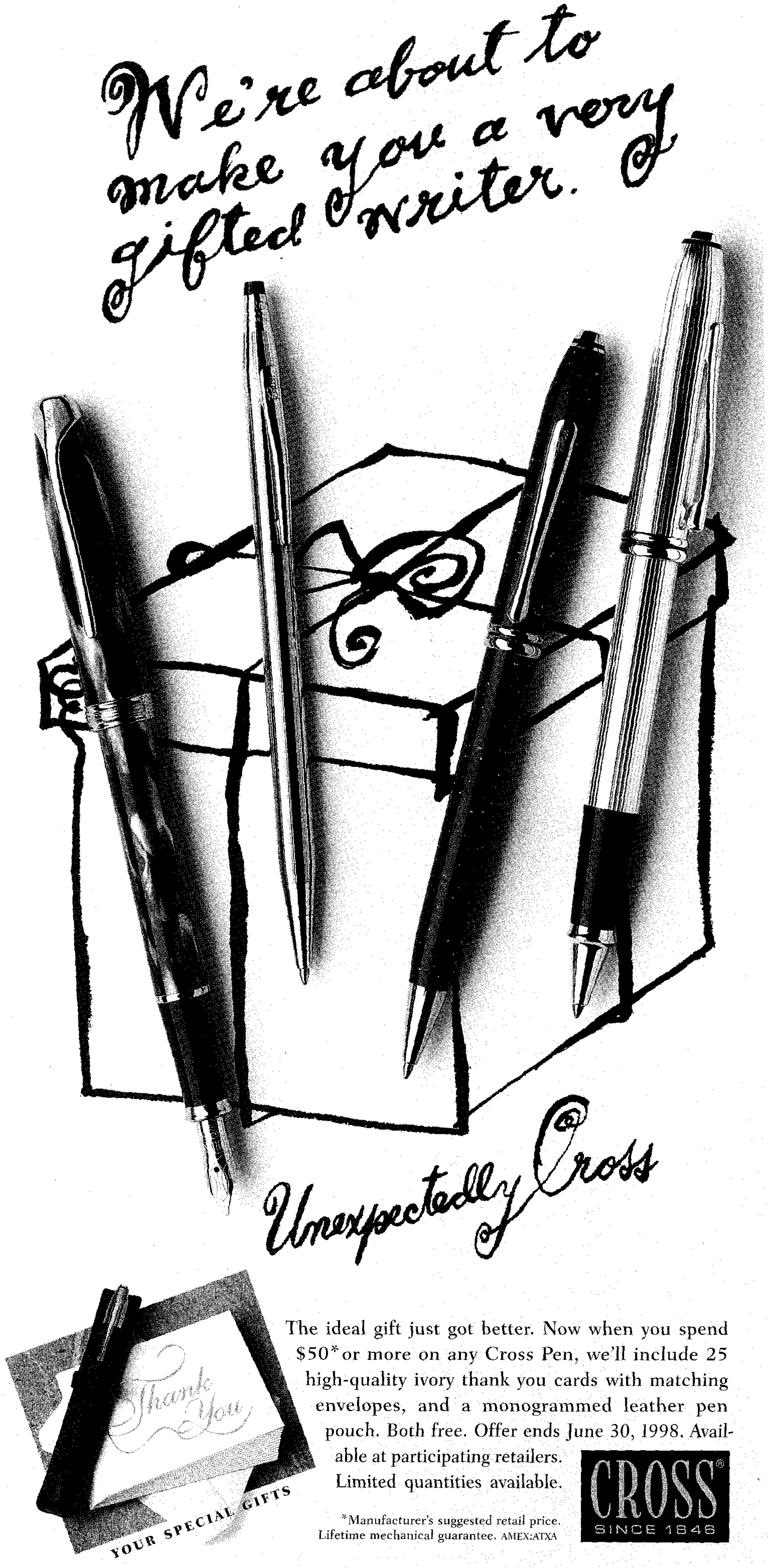
- **1** Gray, like the outside of hosiery (4)
- **4** Drains hot tubs from the other side (4)
- **7** Made a guarantee covering spring that's no longer fresh (8)
- **8** Marsupial after removing the middle nut from a tree (4)
- **10** Show up in Paris early (5)
- **11** A ring! (5)
- **12** Greek warmonger captures west end of Athenian neighborhoods (5)
- **13** Correct a grand conclusion (5)
- **15** Group of people did imitations of a rooster (4)
- **16** Unpleasant person accepted by rational author of detective stories (8)
- **17** They say I will land in the water (4)
- **18** Chooses zero points (4)

DOWN

- **1** Requests pack animal to carry king (4)
- **2** Upon reflection, foams at the mouth about Western star Gibson's violent movies (5-2-3)
- **3** Hang around old play that's stayed in the theatres (8)
- **4** Dismissing the odd characters, I saw his role twist and turn (5)
- **5** Drop in now with public-relations expert (5, 5)
- **6** Fortune-tellers adopting no expressions of contempt (6)
- **9** Dangerous building divider, if installed upside down (8)
- **11** Tennis player retracting one's story (6)
- **12** Irritate topless joint (5)
- **14** On "The Love Boat," Lauren beheaded farm animals (4)

• •

The solution to puzzle No. 46 appears on page 71. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an email to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.



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BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

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1. How would you describe your child's personality? (a) superb; (b) average; (c) better than cousins'; (d) sociopathic.

2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how willing and eager is your child when it comes to chores like cleaning up toxic waste or reroofing the house?

3. Is your child pierced? If so, indicate where: (a) ears; (b) nose; (c) mouth; (d) would rather not say.

4. Is your child a finicky eater when it comes to such foods as squirrel, badger, and king snake?

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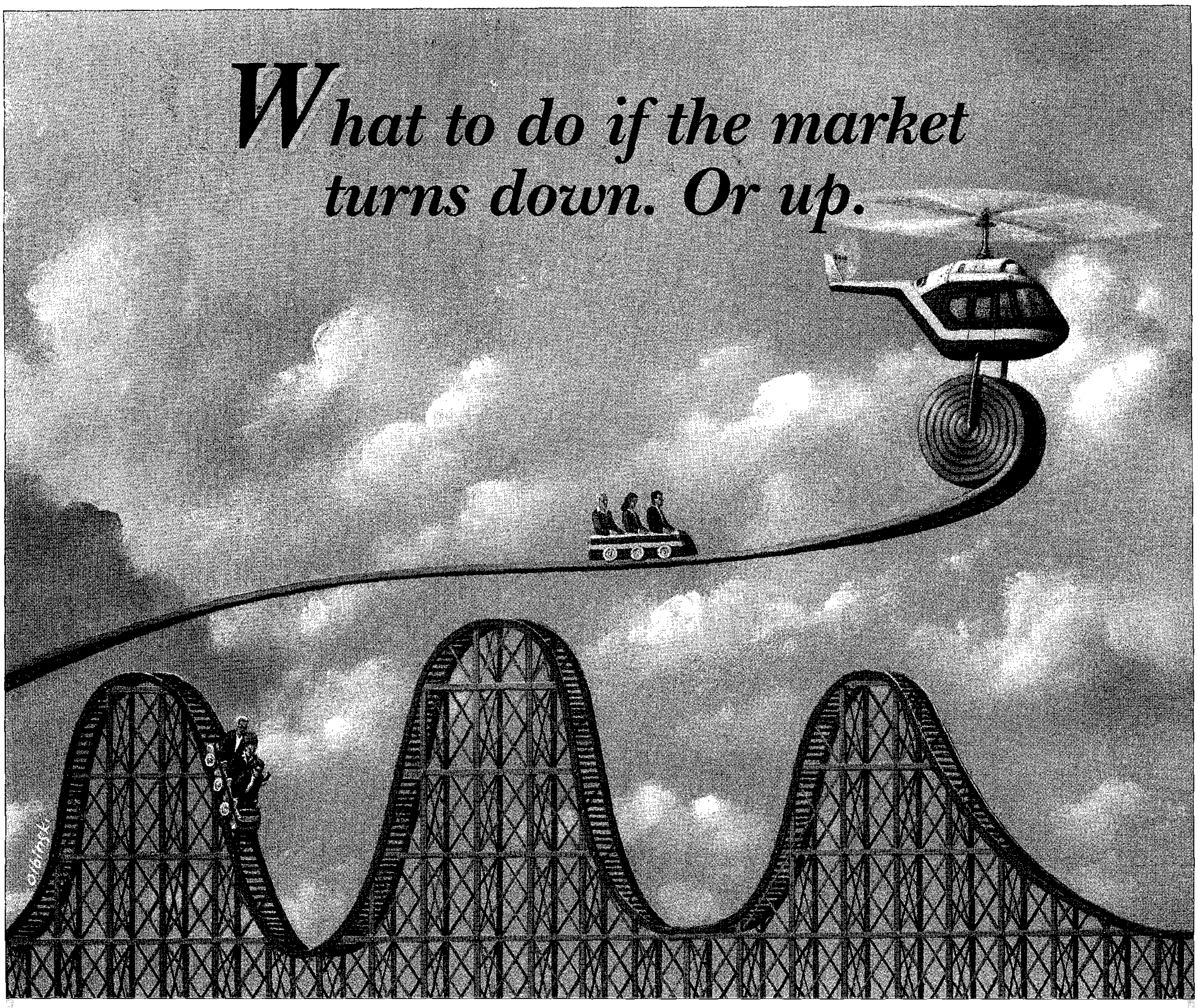
3. Five-Day, Six-Night Field Trip to Local Native American Casino. Children will work closely with counsellors as they try to "break the bank" at nearby Magua's Revenge Casino, run by the proud—and still fierce—Mashmaquoddy Nation. Includes workshops on card-counting, roulette-wheel fixing, and bartering your wristwatch for credit. $5,000. *(Cash only.)*

4. Seven-Day Blackfly-Eradication Program. As part of our continuing effort to bring about our own Silent Spring, campers will "take the war to the enemy," spending a rigorous but exhilarating week wading through nearby Swamp Eecheeatchoo (Mashmaquoddy for "Can't We Look for Food Somewhere Else?"), spraying insect breeding grounds with the latest in no-nonsense insecticides cooked up by Counsellor Andy (Anthrax) Widgely. Workshops include poisonous-snake identification, heat prostration, and coping with Giardia. $600. *(Emergency helicopter evacuation available for extra charge.)*

5. Three-Week House-Renovation Field Trip. Campers will learn how to renovate a decrepit house in a marginal neighborhood of a major American urban center. Working under the close supervision of a general contractor, campers will live on-site and experience the joys—and frustrations!—of putting in eighteen-hour days transforming "this old house" into a beautiful home with a "Sold!" sign out front. Conducted exclusively at the winter lodgings of Camp Director Big Mike Bargle. $200. *(Materials extra.)*

CAMP EARWIG

See you soon! ◆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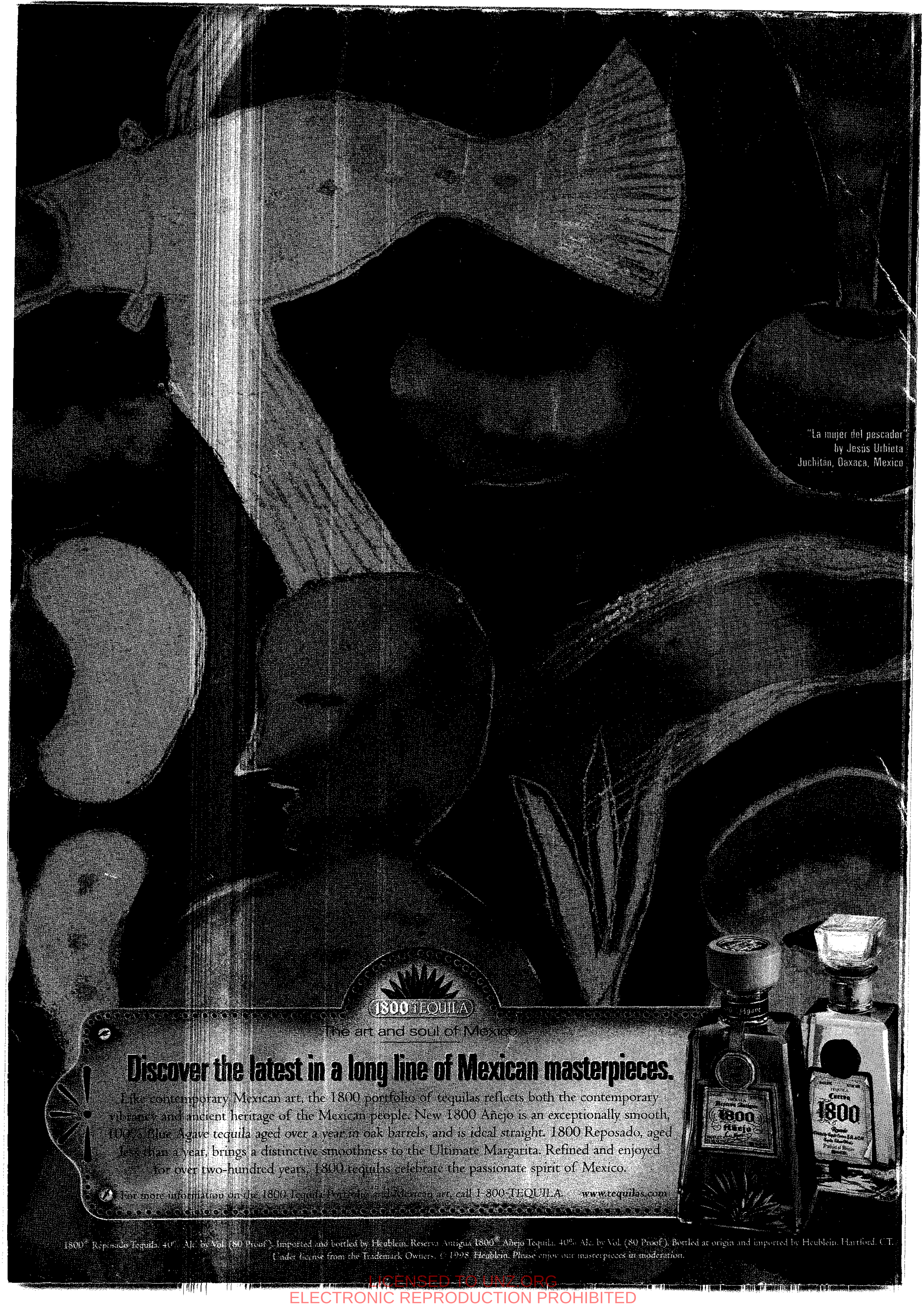

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